

AN 102
HISTORY
OF
ENGLAND,
IN A
SERIES OF LETTERS
FROM A
NOBLEMAN TO HIS SON.



*Nec minimum mœnere decus, vestigia Græcæ
Ausî deferere, & celebrare domestica facta: HOR.*

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THE HISTORY
OF
ENGLAND



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OF
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BY
J. H. B. [illegible]
[illegible]
[illegible]

TO THE PUBLIC.

THE editor cannot dismiss a new edition of this work, without expressing the pleasure he feels in its reception. It was at first ushered into the world with none of the usual methods of awakening curiosity, or biasing the judgement. Its author as well as its editor, was and still continues, unknown. It appeared with very little splendor, scarce any expence was laid out in the publication, and that praise was studiously avoided which was only to be caught by pursuing.

However, under all these disadvantages, the work has succeeded beyond the editor's most sanguine expectations, if he may judge from the numbers which have been sold, and the commendations which have been given. Nor can it be a circumstance of small pleasure to him, to think that a performance, calculated chiefly to dispel the prejudice of party, and soften the malevolence of faction, has had purchasers, at a time when almost every new publication that respects our history or constitution tends to fix the one and inflame the other.

It is true, that but very little of the merit is his own, and that he only applauds himself for triumphs which have been gained by another. However, he is willing to take to himself those advantages which are declined by the great personage who has only deserved them; for the poor often think themselves very fine in those cloaths which are thrown aside by their betters.

But, to speak more particularly of my own part of the work, I am not a little proud in hearing that the conclusion is not entirely contemptible, and that it does not fall very far short of the beginning. It was my aim to observe the perspicuity and conciseness of the original, and as his lordship seems to have taken Tacitus for his model, so I took him for mine. It was, in fact, no easy matter, in such a variety of materials as our history affords, to reject trivial particulars, and yet preserve a concatenation of events; to crowd a multitude of facts into so small a compass, and yet not give the work the

TO THE PUBLIC.

air of an index. In this, all who have hitherto abridged our history have failed ; how far the present work has succeeded, posterity must be left to judge.

The first part of these letters, as we have formerly observed, was written for the instruction of a young man of quality, who was then at college ; the editor, therefore, is surprised with an objection usually made against them, that they are rather above the capacity of boys.

If by boys be meant children, I grant it ; the facts, stripped of all ornament, may perhaps be most proper for them ; but, on the contrary, those who are rising up to manhood, should be treated as men, and no works put into their hands, but such as are capable of exercising their capacity, and which the most mature judgment would approve. I am well aware, that many school-masters will prefer any of those little histories of England that are written by way of question and answer, and think their boys making great advances, while they are thus loading their memory, without exercising their judgment : with these men no arguments will prevail ; and I can only dismiss such with wishing that the professors were as respectable as the profession.

Once more, therefore, I must assert, that, though the book is written to men, it will be a proper guide for the instruction of boys : *Maxima debetur pueris reverentia*, is true, as well with regard to the books they should read as the examples they should see. In this I flatter myself, that they will find nothing either to corrupt their morals or their style ; no slavish tenets that abridge freedom and increase dependence ; no enthusiastic rants, that drive even virtue beyond the line of duty. Scarcely any opinions are hazarded merely from their elegance or singularity ; truth only seems to have guided the pen : and it is remarkable that many of the tenets in these letters, that at first publication seemed paradoxical, have been since illustrated by one of the most elegant commentators upon our constitution. †

† Dr. Blackstone.

AN
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LETTER I.

Dear Charles,
THE accounts I receive from Mr. ****, your tutor at Oxford, of your conduct and capacity, give me equal pleasure, both as a father and as a man. I own myself happy, in thinking that society will one day reap the advantage of your improved abilities but I confess myself vain, when I reflect on the care I have taken, and the honour I shall, perhaps obtain from assisting their cultivation. Yes, my Charles, self-interest thus mixes with almost every virtue; my paternal vanity is, perhaps, greater than my regards for society in the present instance;

but you should consider that the bad, pride themselves in their folly, but good minds alone are vain of their virtues.

I need scarcely repeat what I have so often observed, that your assiduity for a few years, in the early period of life, will give ease and happiness to the succeeding : a life spent in regularity and study, in college, will not only furnish the mind with proper materials, but fit it, by habit, for future felicity. Mathematics will teach you to think with closeness and precision, and the ancient poets will enlarge your imagination ; from these two helps, and not from the subtleties of logic, or metaphysical speculations, the mind is at once strengthened and improved. Logic or metaphysics may give the theory of reasoning ; but it is poetry and mathematics, though seemingly opposite, that practically improve and fit us for every rational inquiry.

These were the studies I recommended as principally conducive to your improvement, and your letters alone are sufficient instances of your complying with my advice. I confess my fears in giving any future instructions on such topics to one who seems better conversant with them than his instructor : I therefore must leave a subject, where my superiority at least may be contested.

But, after all, my child, these studies are at best but ornaments of the mind, designed rather to polish or to fit it for higher improvements, than as materials to be employed in guiding our conduct as individuals, or members of society. There is a field that, in some measure, still lies untrodden before you, and from that alone true wisdom and real improvement can be expected ; I mean history. From history, in a great measure, every advantage that improves the gentleman, or confirms the

patriot, can be hoped for : it is that which must qualify you for becoming a proper member of the community ; for filling that station, in which you may hereafter be placed, with honour ; and for giving, as well as deriving, new lustre to that illustrious assembly, to which, upon my decease, you have a right to be called.

Yet, still, nothing can be more useless than history, in the manner in which it is generally studied, where the memory is loaded with little more than dates, names, and events. Simply to repeat the transaction is by some thought sufficient for every purpose; and a youth, having been once applauded, for his readiness in this way, fancies himself a perfect historian. But the true use of history does not consist in being able to settle a genealogy, in quoting the events of an obscure reign, or the true epoch of a contested birth ; this knowledge of facts hardly deserves the name of science : true wisdom consists in tracing effects to their causes. To understand history is to understand man, who is the subject. To study history is to weigh the motives, the opinions, the passions of mankind, in order to avoid a similitude of errors in ourselves, or profit by the wisdom of their example.

To study history in this manner may be begun at any age. Children can never be too soon treated as men. Those masters, who alledge the incapacity of tender youth, only tacitly reproach their own : those who are incapable of teaching young minds to reason, pretend that it is impossible. The truth is, they are fonder of making their pupils talk well than think well ; and much the greater number are better qualified to give praise to a ready memory than a sound judgment. The generality of mankind consider a multitude of facts as the real food of

the mind, not as subjects proper to afford it exercise. From hence it proceeds, that history, instead of teaching us to know ourselves, often only serves to raise our vanity, by the applause of the ignorant ; or what is more dangerous, by the self delusion of untried vanity.

Assuming ignorance, is, of all dispositions, the most ridiculous : for, in the same proportion as the real man of wisdom is preferable to the unlettered rustic, so much is the rustic superior to him, who without learning imagines himself learned. It were better that such a man had never read, for then he might have been conscious of his weakness ; but the half-learned man, relying upon his strength, seldom perceives his wants till he finds his deception past a cure.

Your labours in history have hitherto been rather confined to the words, than the facts, of your historical guides. You have read Xenophon or Livy, rather with a view of learning the dead languages in which they are written, than of profiting by the instructions which they afford. The time is now come for discontinuing the study of words for things, for exercising your judgment, and giving more room to reason than the fancy.

Above all things, I would advise you to consult the original historians in every relation. Abridgers, compilers, commentators, and critics, are in general only fit to fill the mind with unnecessary anecdotes, or lead its researches astray. In the immensity of various relations, your care must be to select such as deserve to be known, because they serve to instruct ; the end of your labour should not be to know in what year fools or savages committed their extravagancies, but by what methods they emerged from barbarity. The same necessity

there is for knowing the actions of the worthy part of princes, also compels us to endeavour to forget those of the ignorant and vulgar herd of kings, who seem only to slumber in a seat they were accidentally called to fill. In short, not the history of kings, but of men, should be your principal concern; and such an history is only to be acquired by consulting those originals who painted the times they lived in. Their successors, who pretended to methodize their histories, have almost universally deprived them of all their spirit, and given us rather a dry catalogue of names, than an improving detail of events. In reality history is precious or insignificant, not from the brilliancy of the events, the singularity of the adventures, or the greatness of the personages concerned, but from the skill, penetration, and judgment of the observer. Tacitus frequently complains of his want of materials, of the littleness of his incidents, of the weakness and villainy of his actors; yet, even from such indifferent subjects, he has wrought out the most pleasing and the most instructive history that ever was written: it will therefore be entirely the work of your own judgment to convert the generality of historians to your benefit; they are, at present, but rude materials, and require a fine discernment to separate the useful from the unnecessary, and analyse their different principles.

Yet, mistake me not: I would not have history to consist of dry speculations upon facts, told with phlegm, and pursued without interest and passion; nor would I have your reason fatigued continually in critical researches; all I require is, that the historian would give as much exercise to the judgment, as the imagination. It is as much his duty to act the philosopher, or politician, in his narratives

as to collect materials for narration. Without a philosophical skill in discerning, his very narrative must be frequently false, fabulous, and contradictory: without political sagacity, his characters must be ill drawn, and vice and virtue be distributed without discernment or candour.

What historian can render virtue so amiable as Xenophon? Who can interest the reader so much as Livy? Sallust is an instance of the most delicate exactness, and Tacitus of the most solid reflection: from a perfect acquaintance with these, the youthful student can acquire more knowledge of mankind, a more perfect acquaintance with antiquity, and a more just manner of thinking and expression, than, perhaps, from any others of any age or country. Other ancient historians may be read to advance the study of ancient learning, but these should be the ground-work of all your researches. Without a previous acquaintance with these, you enter upon other writers improperly prepared; until these have placed you in a proper train of moralizing the incidents, other historians may, perhaps, injure, but will not improve you. Let me therefore, at present, my dear Charles intreat you to bestow the proper care upon those treasures of antiquity; and by your letters, every post, communicate to your father, and your friend, the result of your reflections upon them. I am at a loss, whether I shall find more satisfaction in hearing your remarks, or communicating my own? However, in which soever of them I shall be employed it will make my highest amusement. Amusement is all that I can now expect in life, for ambition has long forsaken me; and, perhaps, my child, after all, what your noble ancestor has observed is most true: *When all is done, human life is, at the greatest and the best, but like a froward child, that must be played with and*

humoured a little to keep it quiet till it falls asleep, and then the care is over.

LETTER II.

I Entirely acquiesce in your sentiments, that universal history is a subject too extensive for human comprehension, and that he who would really reap the advantages of history must be contented to bound his views. Satisfied with being superficially acquainted with the transactions of many countries, the learner should place his principal attention only on a few.

Your remarks on the Greek and Roman republics far surpass my expectations; you have justly characterised them as the finest instances of political society that could be founded on the basis of a false religion. Where religion is imperfect, political society, and all laws enacted for its improvement, must be imperfect also. Religion is but philosophy refined; and no man could ever boast an excellence in politics, whose mind had not been previously opened and enlarged by the institutions of theology, an error in religion, ever producing defects in legislation.

Forgive me dear Charles, if I once more congratulate myself upon the pleasure I expect from your future eminence. You are now tinctured with universal history, and are thoroughly conversant with that of Greece and Rome; but there is another department of history still remaining, and that much more important than any I have yet mentioned; I mean the HISTORY OF ENGLAND. The history of this country is the proper study of an

Englishman; however, it peculiarly concerns those who may, like you, one day have such an important character to support in its administration, and whose own name, perhaps, may find a place in the historic page. All who are enamoured of the liberty and the happiness which they peculiarly enjoy in this happy region, must surely be desirous of knowing the methods by which such advantages were acquired; the progressive steps from barbarity to social refinement, from society to the highest pitch of well constituted freedom. All Europe stands in astonishment at the wisdom of our constitution, and it would argue the highest degree of insensibility in a native of this country, and one too who from his birth enjoys peculiar privileges, to be ignorant of what others so much admire.

I shall not insist upon a principal use to which some apply the English history, I mean that of making it the topic of common conversation; yet, even from such a motive, though in itself trifling, no well-bred man can plead ignorance. Its greatest advantage, however, is, that a knowledge of the past enables the attentive mind to understand the present: our laws and customs, our liberties and abuse of liberty, can scarcely be understood without tracing them to their source, and history is the only channel by which we can arrive at what we so eagerly pursue.

But, were I to compare the history of our own country, in point of amusement, with that of others, I know of none, either ancient or modern, that can vie with it in this respect. In other histories, remote and extensive connection interrupt the reader's interest, and destroy the simplicity of the plan. The history of Greece may be easily divided into seven different histories, and into so

many it has actually been divided : the history of Rome, from the time it begins to be authentic, is little else than an account of the then known world : but, in England, separated, by its situation, from the continent, the reader may consider the whole narrative, with all its vicissitudes, in one point of view ; it unites the philosopher's * definition of beauty, by being *variously uniform*.

The simplicity in an history of our own country is therefore excellent ; but I can direct to few who have improved the materials it affords with a proper degree of assiduity or skill. The historians, who have treated of this subject, have in general written for a party ; many, with an open avowal of their abuse. Some, who have had talents for this undertaking, were unable to afford themselves sufficient leisure to polish their work into a degree of requisite perfection ; while others, who have laboured with sufficient assiduity, have been woefully deficient in point of sagacity, or proper skill in the choice of those facts they thought proper to relate. Whatever has been known, and not what was worth knowing, has been faithfully transcribed ; so that the present accounts of the country resemble the ancient face of the soil : here an uncultivated forest ; there a desolate wild ; and, in a very few places, a spot of earth adorned by art, and smiling with all the luxuriance of nature. To make history, like the soil, truly useful, the obstacles to improvement must be torn away, new assistances must be acquired from art ; nor can the work be deemed properly finished, till the whole puts on simplicity, uniformity, and elegance. As the case is as present, we must read a library, to acquire a knowledge of

* *Hutcheson.*

English history, and, after all, be contented to forget more than we remember.

The history of England, may be divided, properly enough, into three periods ; very different, indeed, with regard to their duration, but almost of equal importance. The first is from the commencement of our knowledge of the country to its conquest by the Normans : the second, from the time of William the Conqueror to the alteration of the constitution by the beheading of King Charles I ; the last contains the remaining period of our history. It will at once appear, that such a division is extremely unequal : the first department may be said to extend to a period of more than a thousand years ; the second contains not less than seven hundred, while the remaining does not take up two. Chronologists, indeed, would divide it in a very different manner : however, I am rather inclined to this division, more by the peculiar use which may be made of each period, than the mere regularity of time. To consider the first part with accuracy, belongs properly to the philosopher ; the second is the business of him who would understand our constitution, and is the proper study of a legislator ; and the last, of such as would be acquainted with the connexions and relations in which we stand with regard to our neighbours of the continent, and our foreign, our domestic trade ; that is, in other words, to the merchant and politician.

There is scarce any other passion, but that of curiosity, excited by a knowledge of the early part of our history. We may go through the accounts of that distant æra with the same impartiality with which we consider the original inhabitants of any other country, as the customs of our British ancestors have scarce any connection with our

own : but then, to some minds, it must be a pleasing disquisition to observe the human animal, by degrees, divesting himself of his native ferocity, and acquiring the arts of happiness and peace : to trace the steps, by which he leaves his precarious meal, acquired by the chase, for a more certain, but a more laborious repast, acquired first by pasturage, then by cultivation.

After the conquest, the rude outlines of our present constitution began to be formed. Before the Norman invasion, there might be some customs resembling those at present in practice ; but the only reason of their continuance was, because they had before been practised in common among the invaders. At this period, therefore, an Englishman becomes interested in the narrative ; he perceives the rise and the reasons of several laws, which now serve to restrain his conduct, or preserve his property. The rights of our monarchs, the claims of foreign potentates, the ineffectual struggles for liberty, and the gradual encroachments of ambition, these highly interest him, as he in some measure owes to these transactions the happiness he enjoys.

But the last period is what is chiefly incumbent upon almost every man to be particularly conversant in. Every person, residing here, has a share in the liberties of this kingdom ; as the generality of the people are ultimately invested with the legislation. It is therefore every man's duty to know that constitution, which, by his birth-right, he is called to govern : a freeholder, in a free kingdom, should certainly be instructed, in the original of that agreement by which he holds so precious a tenure.

These motives equally influence almost every rank of people ; but how much more forcibly should they operate upon you, whose honours, whose trusts, and possessions, are likely to be so considerable. Others may have their liberties to support ; you must sustain your liberty, your property, and the dignity of your station. I shall therefore, without farther preface, in some future correspondence, communicate the result of my enquiries on this subject ; a subject which, I own, has employed all the leisure I had to spare from, I will not say more important, but more necessary duties. I shall endeavour, at once to supply the facts, and the necessary consequences that may be deduced from them. I shall separate all that can contribute nothing either to amusement or use, and leave such dull compilers, or systematic writers of history, whose only boast is, *to leave nothing out*. A more thorough knowledge of the subject cannot be communicated without pain, nor acquired without study : perhaps too minute a skill in this, or any one subject, might disqualify the mind for other branches of science, equally demanding our care. Of whatever use it may be, I hope you will consider it as an instance of my regard though it should fail to add to your opinion of my sagacity

LETTER III.

THERE seems to be a natural tendency in every nation to run its antiquity as far back as possible, and when once they have arrived at the regions of fiction, no bounds are set to the wonders of every narration. Were we to take our character of the ancient inhabitants of this island from the legends, monuments, or traditions, which have been left by those inhabitants themselves, we might be apt to imagine, that arts, even in that early period, were cultivated, and sciences known, to some degree of perfection. The Druids, if we believe some fragments of their own, understood astronomy and medicine, and gave lessons in morality and metaphysics. But what credit can be given to the accounts of a barbarous people, told by themselves? The knowledge and learning, indeed, of their priests might be great, if compared with the almost brutal simplicity and ignorance of the rest of the people; but it could not deserve the name of science, if put in competition with what was known and practised by their polite cotemporaries of Greece and Rome.

From the accounts of those sensible writers, and not from the fictitious absurdities of the Druids themselves, we are to estimate this ancient people. All that we find related by credible witnesses and sufficient authority, before the Romans entered this island, is, that the country was filled with incredible numbers of people, and their fields stored with great plenty of animals, savage and domestic. Their houses were meanly built and scattered, as if acci-

dentally, over the country, without observing distance, or order. The only motives of their choice were the peculiar fertility of some happy spot, or the convenience of wood and water. They lived upon milk and flesh procured by the chase; for corn was scarcely known among them. What cloaths they wore were skins of beasts; but a great part of their bodies was left always exposed to the injuries of the weather, all that was naked being painted with blue. This custom of painting was universal among them, either in order to strike terror into their enemies, or to defend the pores of the naked skin from the injuries of the weather.

Their towns, if a collection of huts could deserve that name, were mostly built upon the coasts, in places where strangers generally resorted for the sake of commerce. The commodities exported were chiefly hides and tin; and probably, other spontaneous productions of the soil, which required no art in the preparation.

Their government, like that of the ancient Gauls, consisted of several petty principalities, which seem to be the original governments of mankind, and deduced from the natural right of paternal dominion: but whether these little principalities descended by succession, or whether the rulers were elected by the consent of the people, is not recorded. Upon great or uncommon dangers, indeed, the chief commander of all their forces was chosen by common consent in a general assembly, as Cæsar relates of Chaslibelanus, upon his invasion. The same was done upon their revolts against the Roman colonies, under Caractacus and their Queen Boadicea: for among them, women were admitted to their principalities, and general commands, by the right of succession, merit, or nobility.

Such were the customs of the ancient Britons, and the same may serve for a description of every other barbarous nation of which we have any knowledge. Savage man is an animal in almost every country the same; and all the difference between nations, results from customs introduced by luxury, or cultivated by refinement. What the inhabitant of Britain was at that time, the inhabitant of South America, or Cafraria, may be at this day. But there was one custom among the ancient inhabitants of this island, which seems peculiar to themselves, and is not to be found in the accounts of any other ancient or modern nation. The custom I mean, was a community of wives, among certain numbers, and by common consent. Every man married, indeed, but one woman, who was always after, and alone, esteemed his wife; but it was usual for five or six, ten, twelve, or more, either brothers or friends, as they could agree, to have all their wives in common. But this, though calculated for their mutual happiness, in fact proved their greatest disturbance; and we have some instances, in which this community of wives produced dissensions, jealousies, and death. Every woman's children, however, were the property of him who married her; but all claimed a share in the care and defence of the whole society, since no man knew which was his own.

To estimate the wisdom of the people, we must examine the manners of their teachers. If the laity were so very barbarous, the Druids, their instructors, must have but few pretences to superior refinement: yet, I know not how, we have different and almost contradictory accounts of this extraordinary fraternity. They have been represented, by some, as persons of learning, derived to them by long tradition. Their skill consisted in the observation of

the heavens, and upon the influence of its appearance they gave their countrymen omens of failure or success. They taught a morality, which principally consisted in justice and fortitude. Their lives were simple and innocent ; in woods, caverns, and hollow trees ; their food acorns or berries, and their drink water. They were respected and admired, not only for knowing more than other men, but for despising what all others valued and pursued : by their virtue and temperance, they reprov'd and corrected those vices in others, from which they were themselves happily free ; and made use of no other arms, than the reverence due to integrity, to enforce obedience to their own commands. From such a conduct as this they derived so much authority, that they were not only priests, but judges also, throughout the nation. No laws were instituted without their approbation ; no person punished with bonds or death, but by their condemnation.

But, on the other hand, we learn, that all their knowledge was imposture, and their simplicity only a savage passion for solitude ; their language barbarous, and their manners still more rude : these were such as called aloud for some more enlightened instructors, to conquer and to direct them. The Druids seem'd formed for the people whom they governed, sacrificed human victims, which they burned in large wicker idols, which were made so capacious, as to contain a multitude of persons, who were, in this manner, at once consumed in the flames. The female Druids plunged their knives in the breasts of the prisoners taken in war, and prophesied from the manner in which the blood happened to stream from the wound. Their altars con-

sifted of four broad stones, three of which were set edgeways, and the fourth horizontally on the top, many of which are still to be seen.

In accounts so seemingly contradictory, we are entirely to give assent to neither. That they pretended to astrology is certain: this, and not their piety, probably gave them such influence among their countrymen. To judge of what the Britons then were, as I have already hinted, we must look to what savage nations are at present: we perceive what authority a pretence to astrology, in barbarous countries, confers; the astrologer being generally considered, in almost all the eastern kingdoms, as the second, if not the first man of the state. That the Druids deceived the people with a false religion cannot be denied; but, yet I can never think that they were impostors: they first deceived themselves into a belief and veneration of what they taught, and then made use of every motive to persuade the people. The ignorant and erroneous, in the commerce of this life, are many; the villains and impostors are comparatively speaking, but few. As for human sacrifices, few probably were destroyed upon this horrid occasion, but prisoners taken in war; and such have ever been sacrificed, by savage nations, rather from a principle of revenge than religion. It is not peculiar to the religion of the Druids alone, but was primarily the barbarous practice of those very nations who then exclaimed against it most loudly.

In short, the religion of the Druids was no more than that of every barbarous nation with whose ceremonies we have any acquaintance. This was the religion which was not only practised in Britain, but which prevailed, originally, over the greatest part of the world. The original inhabitants of

Europe, as a very learned antiquary * has finely proved, were the same; all speaking one language, obeying the same deities, and governed by similar laws. Successive invasions from different parts of Asia brought new changes; and, as the colonies went westward, the Greek, the Roman, and Teutonic languages and customs were super-induced over the ancient Celtic. All the countries, most accessible to strangers, or most subject to invasions, were first changed; those which lay surrounded by mountains, or were in some measure retired by their situation, such as Wales, Cornwall, the highlands of Scotland, Ireland, Biscay, and Crim Tartary, all preserved their primitive manners. It is even found that these countries still adhere to many of the ancient Druidical customs, as far as the alteration of religion will admit. We have, as yet, an opportunity of viewing many of their ancient, and, in some measure, venerable superstitions, still in Ireland: these are, however, wearing out by degrees, and another century will entirely efface every vestige of barbarous antiquity.

I am,

Dear Charles, &c.

* *Perron.*

LETTER IV.

IT is, in some measure, happy for a barbarous people to be conquered by a country more polite than themselves. Whatever evils the ambition of heroes generally produces, it is attended with one advantage, that of disseminating arts, and making humanity more extensive. The Britons, savage and rude as they were, in some measure, called for more polite instructors ; and the Romans, of all the conquerors history can produce, were at once the most polite, the most generous, and humane.

A country, divided like Britain into a variety of small principalities, must necessarily have been separated into various, and often opposite interests. Its princes must have been frequently at war, merely for the sake of plunder, to keep their troops in exercise, or to gratify vanity and ambition. We may easily, therefore, form an idea of the miseries of a rude people, who had nothing but fear to keep them from war with each other, and who could build no longer on a lasting peace, than while they avoided giving an opportunity of plunder to their enemies.

To complete the picture of the calamities of this people, all the trading and maritime towns, next the continent, were in possession of foreign invaders long before the Romans entered the island. These were a people who had been received from motives of hospitality, and who, under the character of exiles in distress, having got footing and shelter among the natives, afterwards made war upon them as enemies. This, added to their fre-

quent tumults and massacres among each other, rendered them not only internally unhappy, but an easy prey to each invader. Besides, they were ill supplied with arms, and those they had were only such as were no longer in use among the refined nations of the continent. They fought in chariots armed with scythes, applied to the wheels. These were terrible without execution, and made rather to astonish the rude and ignorant, than to break such ranks as were not to be daunted by the mere appearance of danger. Their defensive armour only consisted of a wicker shield; and they approached the enemy shouting, clashing their arms, and sounding their trumpets, as if they designed rather to terrify than destroy. Their chariots generally attacked the enemy's cavalry, and from these they would frequently leap, and fight on foot, till, being fatigued or overpowered, they would resume their seats, and make the best retreat possible. Unpolished nations, though they have more fierceness in the onset, never act with that cool, persevering resolution, which ensures victory. This can be acquired only where discipline and subordination have long prevailed; and a nation, however brave, levied in haste, will probably never make a figure against veteran troops, hardened by contention, or elated by long success. This was the disposition of the inhabitants; but the face of the country rendered them still more open to every invader: it was plain and open, without towns, fortresses, or any place of retreat to secure it from an enemy, except what the forests might happen to afford. In a word, the inhabitants were destitute of all means of defence, but what their native courage was able to supply, or a love of liberty might inspire.

Such were the people and customs of Britain, when the Romans first invaded their island under the ensigns of Julius Cæsar, the greatest commander that ever led an army. When I consider this great man, who had already been the conqueror of Gaul; when I reflect on his courage, his conduct, and perseverance; when I take into my view the troops he headed, inured to discipline, and fighting in a manner with which barbarous nations were entirely unacquainted; when I consider these circumstances, and compare them with those of the Britons in the same period, I feel a more than usual share of surprize at the bravery and conduct with which these poor barbarians opposed him.

Anno Ante
C. 55.

It was an established maxim, in the politics of Rome, to deem all auxiliaries as principals, and to allow none to assist the enemies of the state with impunity. This was the pretence Cæsar laid hold of to justify his invasion of England, which was not only looked upon as an ally, but likewise as an asylum to the Gaulish nations, which were at that time enemies of Rome. This might probably, be the ground of his invasion, but the pleasure of conquest was his real motive. To extend the Roman empire, though already too extensive to be governed, was at that time thought the most glorious achievement of humanity. The rest of Europe was in some measure subdued, and nothing left but countries desolate with forests and marshes, and neither tempting from their appearance, nor affording any hopes of plunder. Heroism was at that time, the boast of ambition: nor have men, till very lately, been taught to consider conquerors with an eye of contempt or detestation. Cæsar was resolved on being

a hero, and was more fond of triumph than of justice.

His forces were composed of Germans, Batavians, and Gauls, and veteran Roman legions. He set sail from Gaul about midnight, and arrived on the British coast the next afternoon. The Britons, with their naked troops, made a brave opposition against this veteran army: the conflicts between them were fierce and many, the losses were mutual, and the success various. Cassibelaunus was chosen general in chief of the British forces; but even a foreign invader was not sufficient to keep the petty princes, who commanded the barbarous army, united. Dissension soon entered among them, and some, jealous of the sincerity of their general, or envying his greatness, fled over to Cæsar, submitted to the Romans, and claimed their protection. Others followed this base example, till Cassibelaunus, weakened by so many desertions, resolved upon making what terms he was able, while he had yet an opportunity. He sends to Cæsar, acknowledges the Roman power, agrees upon a certain tribute, and delivers hostages. Thus we see Britain, from the beginning, remarkable for internal dissension, and dissension ever strengthens or invites the invader.

The Romans were pleased with the name of a new conquest, and glad of ending an adventure with honour, which at first promised only difficulties and danger. But the extended forest, and the trackless wild, was not a quarry for men intent on spoil, and raised to greater expectations. Having, therefore; rather discovered than subdued the southern parts of the island, the Romans returned into Gaul with their whole forces, and once more left the Britons to their customs, religion, and laws. By two expeditions which Cæsar made into this island, he rather

increased the glory than the dominions of Rome, and gave Britain the honour of being the last triumph of that mighty republic, which had before reduced the most powerful kingdoms of the habitable globe.

Whatever the tribute was, which they had contracted annually to pay, we have many reasons, from history, to believe they paid it but very negligently. I mention this, as an instance of the little faith which can be expected from an extorted submission, while there is no longer a power to enforce obedience. Upon the accession of Augustus, that emperor had formed a design of visiting Britain, but was diverted from it by an unexpected revolt of the Pannonians. Some years after, he again resumed his design ; but, being met in his way by the British ambassadors, promising the accustomed tribute, and making the usual submissions, he a second time desisted. The year following, finding them unfaithful to their promise, he prepared a third time, for the invasion of this island, but was prevented from putting his design into execution, by their ambassadors, who averted his fury by their adulations and humility. The most savage countries understand flattery almost as well as the most polite, since to be sufficiently servile is, perhaps, the whole of the art, and the truest method of pleasing.

Tiberius followed the maxims of Augustus, and wisely judging the Roman empire already too extensive, made no attempt upon this island. Some Roman soldiers being wrecked on the English coast, the inhabitants not only assisted them with the greatest humanity, but sent them, in safety, back to their general. In consequence of such friendly dispositions, there was a constant intercourse between the two nations ; the principal English nobility resorted to Rome, and some received their education there.

By these means the Britons began sensibly to improve. The first art, which a savage people is generally taught by their politer neighbours, is that of war. Though not wholly addicted to the Roman manner of fighting, the Britons, however, adopted several of their improvements, both in their arms and their arrangements in the field. Their ferocity to strangers was now also lessened, and they first began to coin money, the oldest British coin being that of Comius, who learned a part of the Roman politeness by a residence in Cæsar's camp. They still, however, continued to live as herdsmen and hunters, and adhered to their usual superstitions; a manifest instance of the country being, as yet but thinly inhabited. When we read, in Cæsar, of the numbers of this people, and the vast armies they brought into the field, I am apt to doubt his veracity.

Such armies could scarcely be levied even now; and yet nothing is more certain, than that Britain is ten times more populous now than it was at that time. A nation of herdsmen and hunters can never be very populous; their subsistence takes up a large tract of country, while the husbandman converts every part of nature to human use, and produces the greatest quantity of subsistence from circumscribed possession. The Roman historian has increased their numbers, only to increase the lustre of his glory in subduing them.

LETTER V.

THE second expedition into Britain was made by Claudius, under the conduct of Plautius and pursued by Ostorius, and other Roman commanders, with the usual success. It is true, there were many Britons who preferred *A. D.* their hardy simplicity to imported elegance, 50. and, rather than offer their necks to the Roman yoke, presented their breasts to the sword. But, by degrees their fierceness was subdued, or wholly destroyed; the southern coast, with all the adjacent inland country, was secured by the conquerors, who took possession by fortifying camps, building fortresses, and planting colonies. The rest of the country seemed to look on, patiently waiting till it became their turn to be expelled from their precarious habitations, or to receive their imperious masters.

Prosperity, in general, breeds insolence; the corruption of the prætors and officers, that were appointed to govern this harrassed people, once more roused them into resentment. Caractacus, general and king of the Northern Britons, with inferior numbers, not only made a brave defence, but often seemed to claim a doubtful victory. A drawn battle might be considered as a triumph, to a people only used to defeat. He continued nine years to hold out, and threatened fatal dangers to the Roman colonies. At length, however, in a decisive battle, the Britons were totally defeated, and Caractacus taken prisoner. His exclamation, when led in triumph through Rome, is too remarkable to be passed over in silence.

Observing the opulence, the splendor, and luxury of that great city, *Alas!* cried he, *how is it possible, that people possessed of such magnificence at home, could envy me an humble cottage in Britain?*

One expiring effort more was made by the Britons, to recover their liberty in the times of Nero.

A. D. Paulinus the general of the Romans, going with the greatest part of his forces to subdue the isle of Anglesey, where the superstitions of the Druids were still practised

78. with all their horrid circumstances; the Britons presuming upon his absence, made a general insurrection under Boadicea, queen of the Iceni, whom the Romans had treated with shocking indignities, condemning her for some slight offence to be whipped, and her daughters to be ravished by the soldiery; in revenge, therefore, at the head of a numerous army, she fell upon the Romans wherever they were found defenceless, took their castles, destroyed the chief seats of their power at London and Verulam, and, such was the slaughter, that seventy thousand fell by this revolt. Paulinus, however, soon returned with his army, encountered the British forces headed by their queen, overthrew their powers, and pursued his victory with a slaughter of eighty thousand men, while the conquered queen poisoned herself in despair. Here ended the liberties of Britain. All that now remained were satisfied to exchange freedom for life. This was their last struggle: they, now lost, not only the hopes, but even the desire of vindicating the privileges of nature.

From this time the Romans seemed more desirous of securing what they possessed, than of making new conquests: they separated the Roman province, by a wall, from the Picts, their barbarous

and restless neighbours ; and attempted to humanize the fierceness of those who acknowledged their power. The Roman laws and customs, habits and arms, language and manners, baths and feasts, studies and learning, were introduced and became general. A conduct so prudent, which had been first begun by Agricola, was pursued by his successors with so much success, that the Romans had little trouble afterwards in Britain, except in the defence of their northern frontier.

Had Rome continued peaceably mistress of the world, the Britons, now almost perfectly civilized, might have found means of being happy. But, upon the divisions of the Roman empire, which was ruled by faction, and governed by an insolent soldiery, torn by sedition at home, and subject to invasion abroad, the British legions were, at several times, called over into Gaul, and with them, great numbers of the bravest of the British youth. Thus we see every method pursued, to weaken and render this once hardy people effeminate. The arts of luxury were introduced to soften their minds ; they were denied the use of arms, which might still uphold their native bravery ; the flower of their youth were, at intervals, drained away, and those who remained were bred up in servitude and subjection. All who had a passion for liberty were long since destroyed ; and none were suffered to live, but such as had betrayed their country in the beginning, or had been too cowardly to resist an unjust invasion. It is no wonder, therefore, that, as the Roman forces decreased in Britain, the Picts became more bold in their incursions. These, probably, were the descendants of such Britons as once bravely exchanged their country for freedom, and crossing the narrow sea, which the Romans could not guard, in little boats

of wicker covered with leather, they filled the country wherever they came, with spoil, slaughter, and desolation: when repulsed by superior numbers, they usually retired loaded with spoils, and watched for the next opportunity of invasion, when the Romans were drawn away into the remoter parts of the island.

These enterprizes were often repeated, and as often repressed, till, in the reign of Valentinian the younger, the empire of Rome began to tremble for its capital. Myriads of barbarous nations, under the names of Goths and Vandals, invaded the dominion of this mistress of the world, with terror, perseverance, and rapidity. All the Roman legions were now, therefore, drawn from Britain, and all the Britons, who were fit for military service, were brought away to relieve the emperor, who was pursued by the Goths into Piedmont, and there besieged in Aquileia, a town he attempted to defend.

The Romans now taking their last leave of this province, left the Britons to their own government, and the choice of their own kings. For the exercise of their arms, and for repairing their ramparts, they gave them the best instructions such terrible times would permit. Nothing can be more affecting than the picture of Britain at that period: though the Roman soldiery were drawn away, their families and descendants were still spread over the whole country, and left without a single person, of conduct or courage, to defend them. The Britons who remained began to enter into fresh dissensions for superiority; the enemy continued to pour in greater numbers than ever, from their native forests and mountains: famine, with all its horrid attendants, of disease, robbery, and sedition, increased the miserable pic-

ture of the times : their vices, as Gildas, a cotemporary writer, observes, kept pace with their calamities, the whole forming one detestable group of cowardice, cruelty, and distress.

In this terrible situation it was that they implored the assistance of the Romans for relief.

Their letter upon this occasion still re- *A. D. 448.*

maines upon record : *To Ætius, thrice Consul. The groans of the Britons. Driven by our barbarous enemy to the sea, and from thence back upon the barbarians, we have only left us the choice of a grave, either to be killed by the one, or to be drowned by the other.* The Romans, however, were unable to help themselves, much less capable of giving succour, to so remote, and at present, such unserviceable allies.

Yet, amidst such calamities, this people seemed to have still a peculiar happiness in store ; for they had, in general, embraced Christianity. At what time the Gospel was first preached in this island is not known, nor is it material to know : it is certain, that the original natives of England converted their pagan conquerors some time after to the lights of revelation ; and though this people received laws from others, they adorned them with the religion of truth.

Arts, arms, and elegance, must take their rise, by slow degrees, in every country, and can never be, at once, introduced into it with success. All the pains bestowed in British education, only served to render this people more miserable ; dressed them up as victims for every invader, and plunged them in all the misery of knowing happiness, without being able to practise refinement. The people of a country just reclaimed from barbarity, in some measure, resemble the soil. The cultivation of a

few years may be sufficient to clear away the obstacles to agriculture, but it requires several ages before the land acquires a proper degree of fertility. Thus, all the blood and treasure, which the Romans lost in the conquest of Britain, in the end, only served to depopulate the country, and prepare it for new invaders. The Roman politics succeeded in quelling British courage ; but the inhabitants, deprived of that, seemed destitute of every virtue.

LETTER VI.

I Remember but few instances in history, where the conquerors did not excel the people conquered in every virtue. Savage barbarity, or effeminate luxury, have almost ever been imputed to those countries which were obliged to admit a foreign invader. There is a period between natural rudeness and excessive refinement, which seems peculiarly adapted for conquest in war, and fits mankind for every virtuous and great atchievement. In this state of half-refinement, the Saxons were, at the time in which the Britons were thus distressed. This virtuous and warlike people had conquered wherever they came, and to them the wretched remains of the forlorn Britons had recourse for protection.

As the conquest of this island is generally imputed to the Saxons as a piece of treachery, and an invasion of those rights they were only called in to protect, I shall give the invitation they received from the Britons, as it has been left us by Wittichindus, a cotemporary historian of credit ; and from hence it may be judged what little right the Britons had

afterwards to complain : “ The poor and distressed
“ Britons, almost worn out by hostile invasions, and
“ harrassed by continual incursions, are humble
“ supplicants to you, most valiant Saxons, for succour.
“ We are possessed of a wide extensive, and
“ fertile country ; this we yield wholly to be at
“ your devotion and command. Beneath the wing
“ of your valour we seek for safety, and shall willingly
“ undergo whatever services you may hereafter
“ be pleased to impose.”

The Saxons were one branch of those Gothic nations, which, swarming from the northern hive, came to give laws and liberty to the rest of Europe. A branch of these under the name of Suevi, had, some time before Cæsar’s invasion of Gaul, subdued and possessed an extensive empire in Germany. These, for their strength and valour, were grown formidable to all the German nations. The Suevi were reckoned, by their neighbours, a people for whom the very immortal Gods were not a match in war. They were after divided into several nations, and each became famous for subduing the country which it invaded. France, Germany, and England, were among the number of their conquests.

The Saxons were far more polished than the ancient inhabitants of Britain, though their acquisitions were much inferior to the boasted refinements of Rome. They dressed with some degree of elegance, a luxury which was unknown to the Britons : the women used linen garments, trimmed and striped with purple ; their hair was bound in wreaths, or fell in curls upon their shoulders ; their arms were bare, and their bosoms uncovered ; fashions which, in some measure, seem peculiar to the ladies

of Britain to this day. Their governments were entirely elective, and nearly republican ; their commanders were chosen by merit, and dismissed from duty when their authority was no longer needful. The custom of trying by twelve men is of Saxon original ; slavery and base submission was unknown among them, and they preferred death to a shameful existence. We are told, by Marcellinus, that a body of them being taken prisoners by Symmachus, the Roman, he designed to exhibit them, in the amphitheatre, as gladiators, for the entertainment of the citizens of Rome. The morning, however, on which they were expected to perform, they were every one found dead in his prison, each chusing rather a voluntary death, than to be ignominious instruments of brutal satisfaction to their conquerors. The chastity of this people is equally remarkable, and to be without children, was to be without praise : but in war they chiefly excelled ; they had, in some measure, learned discipline from the Romans, whom they had often conquered : it was their maxim to esteem victory as a doubtful advantage, but courage as a certain good. A nation however, entirely addicted to war, must, consequently be addicted to cruelty ; and those terrors, which a man is taught not to fear himself, he is seldom afraid of inflicting on society. The Saxons are represented as a cruel nation, but their enemies have drawn the picture.

Vortigern, who had been elected king of the distressed Britons, easily induced those conquerors to lend him assistance. They came over into Britain in great numbers, commanded by Hengist and Horfa, of the race of Odin. They marched against

the Picts, and, in conjunction with the British arms, defeated them in several encounters, obliging them to retreat into the most northern parts of the province. The Saxons, thus finding themselves evidently the most powerful people upon the island, seemed resolved to reward themselves with those parts of it which were most to their liking. They first obtained consent from the Britons to send over for more forces, under a pretence of guarding their frontier. These seated themselves in the northern provinces, and repressed the incursions of the Picts and Scots with great bravery and success. Those nations were, therefore, obliged to bound their territories with the rough and mountainous countries that lie between the two seas ; and such have, ever since, continued the boundaries of England and Scotland.

The province thus secured from the common enemy, dissensions began to arise between the Britons and their new allies. The Saxons valued too highly the assistance they had given, and the Britons perhaps under-rated what they had received. In a contest of this nature, it is natural to imagine, that the stronger nation always imposes laws on the weaker. The Saxons, allured by the fertile soil and the soft climate, continued to invite greater numbers from the continent, and now turned their arms upon the Britons, who vainly attempted to oppose them. This contention was still more inflamed by the difference of their opinion in matters of religion, the Saxons being all pagans, and the Britons professing Christianity. At such a time as this, a Christian hero was wanted to vindicate the rights of Christianity ; and, probably, merely for this reason, fiction has supplied us with a Christian hero. King Arthur, the British cham-

A. D. 449.

A. D. 520.

pion, is said to have worsted the Saxons in twelve different engagements; yet, notwithstanding all his victories, and whatever his prowess might have performed, it did not serve to rescue his country from its new possessors. The Saxons pursued their designs with courage and fierceness; new swarms of their countrymen came continually over, till, at length, in about a century and an half, they had subdued the whole body of the province, and established in it seven different kingdoms, which were, by the writers of those times, styled the Saxon Heptarchy.

The Britons, driven from their ancient possessions, to escape the fury of the conquerors retired to the mountainous parts of Wales and Cornwall; countries barren and desolate, but, in some measure, surrounded by the sea, and towards the land, difficult of access. Some great colonies of them, wholly abandoned their native country, sailed over to the neighbouring shores of France, where possessing new seats, they gave a new denomination to that peninsula, which still preserves the name and memory of Britain there, a name no longer continued at home.

All the possessions of the Britons now fell into the power of the conquerors, who began to lose their natural fierceness, and soften into the luxuries of those they had invaded. Though conquerors ever bring their own customs among the people they subdue, they, at the same time, assume some customs from those they have conquered. The Saxons now lost all that spirit of freedom their nation had been long famous for, and, in imitation of the Britons themselves, among whom slavery was permitted since the times of the Romans, they made, the people of Britain slaves. These wretches were used in tilling

the ground, feeding cattle, and other such servile works; farming out lands at a certain yearly stipend, but always held at the will and pleasure of the landlord. The children of this miserable people belonged to the soil, like the rest of the stock or cattle upon it; and thus begun villanage in England, an horrid custom, borrowed from the Romans originally, and derived now to the Saxons by vicious imitation.

The Saxons, now no longer fearing domestic foes, relaxed into luxury and vice, and, finding no other enemies to subdue, began to fight with each other. The princes of the seven kingdoms they had erected began mutually to emulate each other's power, and for the space of above two hundred years, all the misery that ambition, treachery or war, could bring upon a kingdom, was the consequence of their animosity. The dissensions of petty princes are ever more distressful to a people, than the wars of extensive empires. The historians of this period are as barbarous as the transactions they describe; but it is sufficient to know, that, after many various events and revolutions between the several races of the heptarchy, Ecbert descended from the West-Saxon kings, partly by conquest, and partly by inheritance, became the first sole monarch of England. This was the name which the country now assumed, to distinguish it from the principality of Wales, possessed by the ancient Britons; and from that part of the island north of the Tweed, possessed by the Picts and Scots, called Scotland.

No customs, truly British or Roman, were now to be seen: the language of the country, which had been either Latin or Celtic, was discontinued, and the Saxon or English only was spoken. The land

before divided into colonies for governments, was now cantoned into shires, with Saxon appellations to distinguish them. Their habits in peace, and arms in war, their titles of honour, laws and methods of trial, were all continued, as originally practised by the Suevi; but their commonwealths were now no more: these were changed for despotic and hereditary monarchies: and their exemplary chastity, and their abhorrence of slavery were quite forgotten. The conquerors were corrupted by prosperity. They became Christians indeed by the preaching of Austin the monk; but this little improved their manners: twelve hundred British monks, who would not acknowledge Aullin for a saint, are said to have been slaughtered by order of these new converted Christians, in a field near Caerleon.

Christianity, when erroneously taught, is even more injurious to society than paganism; in all the sacrifices to the British idols, or the Saxon god Woden, I have not read of such a multitude of victims offered together. The devotion of this people, however was equal to their ignorance. Their kings frequently abdicated the crown for the cowl; their queens thought it meritorious, though joined in wedlock, to continue in virginity; and some, for this erroneous practice, after their death, were canonized as saints.

At this period, namely, the seventh century, the arts and sciences, which had been before only known in Greece and Rome, were disseminated over Europe, where they sufficed, indeed, to raise the people above natural and savage barbarity, but then they lost their own splendor by the transplantation. The English, at the time I am now speaking of, might be considered as polite, if compared to the naked Britons at the invasion of Cæsar. The houses,

furniture, cloaths, meetings, and all the luxuries of sense, were almost as great then as they are at present : they were only incapable of sentimental pleasure : all the learning of the times was confined to the clergy, and little could be expected from their efforts, since, their principal tenet was to discard the lights of reason. An eclipse was, even by their historians, talked of as a dangerous omen of threatened distresses ; and magic was not only believed as possible, but, what is more strange, there were some who even fancied they understood magic. In short, this whole period was tissued over with ignorance, cruelty and superstition : and the kingdom seemed united under one monarch, only the more readily to admit a new invader.

I am, &c.

LETTER VII.

IT might have reasonably been expected, that a fortunate prince, as Ecbert had always been, at the head of so large an united kingdom, after the expulsion of the Picts, Scots, and Britons, should not only have enjoyed the fruits of peace, but even have left tranquillity and happiness to his most distant posterity : yet, such is the instability of human affairs, and the weakness of man's best conjectures, that Ecbert was scarcely settled in his throne, when the whole kingdom was alarmed by the approach of an unexpected enemy, *A. D. 819.* fierce, barbarous, and brave. About this time a mighty swarm of those nations which had possessed the countries bordering on the Baltic,

began under the names of Danes and Normans, to infest the western coasts of Europe, filling the places wherever they came with slaughter and devastation. It is remarkable enough, that the people whom they spoiled were no other than colonies of their own countrymen, who had migrated some centuries before, and plundered those very countries where they were now themselves plundered in turn. The Normans fell upon the northern coasts of France; the Danes chiefly levelled their fury at England, and *A. D. 832.* entering the Thames with an incredible number of ships, carried away all that could neither be defended nor withdrawn from the suddenness of the invasion.

The weak opposition the Danes met with from the English, only served to invite them to renew their depredations, and make fresh attempts the succeeding season. The bravest blood of the English had been already exhausted in civil war, under the dissensions of the Saxon heptarchy: and when those wars were terminated, pilgrimages, penances, cloisters and superstitions, served to enfeeble the remainder. Thus the Saxons were become as unable to make opposition against the Danes, as the Britons were to oppose the Saxons heretofore: they therefore bought off their invaders with money; a remarkable instance how much they had degenerated from their warlike ancestors. The money which was thus extorted, only increased the avarice and the strength of the enemy. It was also raised by the kings from exactions on the people: this caused new discontent, and served to hasten the fall of their thrones, which already began to totter.

This century, however, did not pass without various success, and doubtful fortune, between the two contending nations. No less than twelve battles

are said to have been fought in one year. The Danes divided their forces into several camps, removed them from one part of the country to another, as they were forced by necessity, invited by hopes of spoil, or induced by the weakness and divisions of the enemy. They fortified posts and passages, built castles for the defence of their borders, and the whole country was in some measure, covered with their redoubts, the vestiges of which remain to this day. This manner of fortifying the country, and the difference of religion, seem to be the only customs in which the Danes differed from the Saxons they had invaded. They were both originally from the same country, and their manners consequently the same.

The similitude of language, laws, and manners, soon produced an intercourse between both nations; and though they were still enemies, the Danes gradually began to mingle among the people of England, and submit to the laws and kings of the country they had partly subdued. But what concord could be expected between Christians as the English then were, and pagans, for such the Danes still continued? Wherefore, though the English, in some measure admitted the Danes, yet, still, they hated them: this produced frequent contests, which most frequently laid the country in blood.

In this period of cruelty, jealousy, and desolation, a man seemed raised up to his bleeding country, to defend its rights, improve the age in which he lived, and even to adorn humanity. Alfred *A. D. 872.* the Great was the fourth son of Ethelwolf, king of England, and had received the earlier part of his education under the inspection of Pope Leo, in Rome, which was at that time the chief seat of arts and learning in Europe. Upon the death of his elder brother, Ethelred, he was called to the

English throne, of which he was only nominally put in possession, the country being over-run by the Danes, who governed with cruelty and pride.

His reign began with wars, and he was forced into the field immediately upon his coronation. His first battles were fought with success; but at length, being overpowered by a Danish combination, the unfortunate Alfred was obliged to seek safety by flight. In this manner, being abandoned by the world, without succour, and fearing an enemy in every face, the royal fugitive was resolved not to forsake his country, as was usual with his predecessors. He retired to the cottage of a cowherd, in a solitary part of the county of Somerset, at the confluence of the rivers Parret and Thone: here he lived six months as a servant, and, as we are told, was sometimes reproved for his indolence, by his mistress, the cowherd's wife. The earl of Devonshire was alone privy to the place of his retreat; and happening to overthrow a body of the Danes, acquainted Alfred with the news of his success.

Alfred now, therefore, began to consider how to turn the present consternation of the enemy to his own advantage. He apprised his friends of the place of his retreat, and instructed them to be ready, with what troops they could raise, upon a minute's warning; but still none was found who would undertake to give intelligence of the forces or posture of the enemy. Not knowing, therefore, whom to confide in, he undertook this dangerous task himself: in the simple dress of a shepherd, with an harp in his hand, he entered the Danish camp, had admission to the principal generals, and was allowed to excel upon that instrument. He soon perceived that the enemy were divided among themselves: he seizes the favourable moment, flies to the earl of Devonshire,

heads his troops, forces their camp, and gains a complete victory.

Alfred knew the arts of negotiation as well as those of war: he had sufficient address to cause himself to be acknowledged king by the Danes, as well as his own natural subjects. London still remained to be subdued: he besieged it, took and fortified it in a manner which was then thought impregnable. He fitted out a fleet, kept the Danes in his dominions under proper subjection, and repressed the invasions of others from abroad. His next care was to polish that country by the arts of peace, which he had subdued by the arts of war. He is said to have drawn up a body of laws; but those which remain to this day, under his name, seem to be no more than laws already practised in the country by his Saxon ancestors, and to which, probably, he gave his sanction. The trials by juries, mulcts and fines for offences, by some ascribed to him, are of a much more ancient date than his reign. It is sufficient to observe, that the penal laws of our ancestors were mild and humane. As a nation becomes more polite, the penal laws become more numerous and severe, till, at length, growing intolerable to the poor, against whom they are principally levelled, they throw off the yoke of legal bondage, either by admitting a despotic prince, or by taking the government into their own hands by military invasion. I remember few great characters in history, that had not a regard for the sciences. Alfred is said to have founded the university of Oxford, and supplied it with books from Rome. The spirit of superstition had quite suppressed all the efforts of philosophy at this period. He is said to have lamented, that no priest in all his dominions understood Latin. As for him, he knew it, and was also well versed in the geometry of those barbarous ages

He was an excellent historian, made some translations from the Latin which still subsist, and it is even said that he composed some excellent poems in the Saxon language. Those hours which he could take from business, he gave to study. He was a complete economist, and this gave him an opportunity of being liberal. His care even extended to the manner in which the people built their houses. Before his time, the generality of the nation made use, mostly, of timber in building. Alfred having raised his palaces with brick, the nobility, by degrees, began to imitate his example.

From this time, though the reigns immediately succeeding are marked with ignorance, superstition, and cruelty, yet, in general, history puts on a form less severe: the whole nation seems to emerge into a greater degree of politeness than it had before enjoyed. The coins of this period are better struck than those of preceding princes. The marine, in his time, seems first to have given rise to our claim to the ocean. In short, from this period, English history may properly be said to commence, and our constitution to take its rise. We are connected with the events previous to Alfred's reign only by motives of curiosity, but with those that follow him, by the more prevailing inducements of interest.

This great man died in the year 900, in the 52d year of his age, after a reign of more than twenty-eight years; the first part spent in war and distress, the latter in peace and prosperity.

LETTER VIII:

Historians and critics are fond of representing the period which succeeded Alfred as entirely barbarous; yet there are many traces of both erudition and politeness in those very ages which have been particularly called obscure. In the reign of his successor, Edward, we find gallantry, which is one of the best marks of politeness in any country, not entirely unknown: his amours with Egwina, who, though by birth a shepherd's daughter, received an education becoming a princess, and, at length, subdued the heart of Edward, is a remarkable instance of the power the fair sex then enjoyed. In this reign, too, the university of Cambridge was founded. The famous Scotus flourished at this time; a man whose learning appears amazing, even to an age which prides itself upon its erudition.

In the reign of Athelstan, who succeeded Edward, the Bible was translated into Saxon; a work which evinces how *A. D. - 924.* just the opinion is with regard to religion, and the learning of that age. Alliances also on the continent were formed by this monarch; it is said he was equally feared by his neighbours, and loved by the greatest princes of Europe.

We find little remarkable in the reign of Edmund I. but that the first capital punishment was instituted by him. He had remarked that fines and pecuniary punishments were too gentle methods of treating those who were convicted of robberies, who generally were men who had nothing to lose; he therefore ordered, that, in gangs of robbers, the oldest

of them should be condemned to the gallows. This was reckoned a very severe law at the time it was instituted. What would our ancestors say, upon seeing the penal laws now used by their posterity.

The death of this monarch is too remarkable to be passed without notice. His virtues, abilities, wealth, and temperance, promised a long and happy reign; when, on a certain day, as he was solemnizing a festival in Gloucestershire, he saw a malefactor, whose name was Leolf, (who had been banished the kingdom for his crimes,) sitting at one of the tables in the hall where the king was at dinner. Enraged at such insolence, he commanded him to be apprehended; but perceiving him drawing his dagger, in order to defend himself, the king started up in a rage, and catching him by the hair, dragged him out of the hall. In the mean time, Leolf, who had drawn the dagger, lifting his arm, with a furious blow stabbed the monarch to the heart, who fell down on the bosom of his murderer.

The Danes, during these three reigns, were kept within proper bounds, they frequently revolted, were subdued, and treated with lenity by the conquerors. The monks now began to have the direction of affairs, and consequently, to enfeeble the state.

Edréd succeeded Edmund, and began his reign *A. D. 946.* with some victories over the Scotch and Danes, which the monks were skilful enough to ascribe to the miraculous interposition of heaven. Among the number Dunstan abbot of Glastonbury had peculiar influence over the mind of the credulous monarch, and, at length became the director of the affairs of the kingdom. By this means the monks acquired such power, as

served to retard the vigour of every future operation against the Danes. However, what they took from the real strength of their country, they returned in appellations of honour and respect. Edred was styled *Monarch of Albion, and King of Britain*; and this at a period when his monarchy was upon the very verge of ruin.

The sons of Edred were set aside, and Edwy, his eldest brother's son, was placed on the throne. At this time the crown appears to have been elective, and those elections entirely influenced by the clergy. The secular priesthood seems to have placed the crown upon this monarch's head in opposition to the monks, who were then rising into esteem among the people. Thus were the English divided by religious disputes, and involved in all the fury of civil war, while the Danes were every hour increasing their own strength, and sending over fresh forces. The seculars were possessed of the riches of the country, but the monks, who opposed them, were in possession of the power of working miracles. Crucifixes, altars, and even horses were heard to harangue in defence of the monks, and inveigh against the secular clergy; but particularly Dunstan the monk had no small power over the hosts of heaven; his illuminations were frequent, his temptations strong, but he always resisted with bravery. The devil, say the monks, and that seriously too, once tempted him in the shape of a fine woman; but the saint soon sent him off, by catching him by the nose, and leading him about for public derision. Such stories were then propagated, and, what is still more extraordinary, were believed. I am the more surpris'd at the credulity of the times, as the people certainly were not destitute of classical learning, and some skill in the polite arts. We have

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a Latin speech or two still preserved, which were spoken by their monarchs at that period, replete with elegance, perspicuity and good sense.

However that may be, the monks by the assistance of miracles, prevailed : Edwy was dethroned, and his brother Edgar placed in his room.

A. D. 959. Historians represent England under this reign as completely happy ; and, it is certain, the kingdom still seemed to enjoy the fruits of Alfred's wisdom ; for, of all the ages, from the entire decadence of taste, till its revival in the fifteenth century, this might be termed the Augustan. The English fleets are described as amounting to above four thousand ships ; kings came to Edgar's court, and returned, without molestation or fear. Music, painting, and poetry, were then held as necessary accomplishments to a refined education, as they are at present. But his gallantries are peculiarly the subject of the historians of that time, and are still the theme of romance. He is said, first, to have debauched a nun, then to have attempted the chastity of a nobleman's daughter ; but the amour, which is famous to this day, is his adventure with the beautiful Elfrida.

Edgar had long heard of the beauty of a young lady, whose name was Elfrida, daughter to the Earl of Devonshire ; but, unwilling to credit fame in this particular, he sent Ethelwolf, his favourite, to see if Elfrida were indeed that incomparable woman report had spoken her. Ethelwolf had no sooner arrived at the Earl of Devonshire's and cast his eyes upon that nobleman's beautiful daughter, but he became desperately enamoured of her himself : such was the violence of his passion, that, forgetting his master, he demanded the beautiful Elfrida for his

own wife. His request was granted; the favourite of a king was not likely to find a refusal, and they were married in private. Returning soon after to court, he assured the king, that Elfrida was much inferior to the representations that had been made of her, and he was amazed how the world could talk so much of her charms. The king was satisfied, and no longer felt any curiosity. Ethelwolf, therefore, after some time, perceiving the king perfectly indifferent with regard to the Lady, represented to his majesty, one day, that, though the fortune of the Earl of Devonshire's daughter would be a trifle to a monarch, yet it would be an immense sum to a needy subject; and therefore he humbly prayed leave to pay his addresses to her, as being the greatest heiress in the kingdom. A request, so seemingly reasonable, was readily complied with. Ethelwolf returned to his wife and their nuptials were solemnized in public. He had the precaution, however, of not permitting her to appear at court, before a king so susceptible of love, while she was so capable of inspiring passion. Notwithstanding all these precautions, it was impossible to keep his treachery long concealed. Favourites are never without private enemies, who desire an opportunity of rising upon their ruin. Edgar was informed of all, but, dissembling his resentment, he took an occasion to visit that part of the country where this miracle of beauty was detained, accompanied by his favourite. When he was near the place, he told him, he had a curiosity to see his wife, of whom he had formerly heard so much: Ethelwolf, thunderstruck at the proposal did all in his power, but in vain, to dissuade him; all he could obtain was leave to go before, on pretence of preparing her for the king's reception. On his arrival, he fell at his wife's

feet, confessing what he had done to be possessed of her charms ; conjured her to conceal, as much as possible, her beauty from the king, who was but too susceptible of passion. Elfrida promised compliance, but prompted either by vanity or revenge, adorned her person with the most exquisite art and called up all her beauty upon this occasion. The event answered her expectations : the king no sooner saw, but he loved, and was instantly resolved to obtain her. The better to effect his design, he concealed his sensations from the husband, and took his leave with a seeming indifference. Soon after Ethelwolf was sent to Northumberland, upon pretence of urgent affairs ; but he never performed the journey : he was found murdered in a wood, by the king's command, who took Elfrida to court, where their nuptials were celebrated with the usual solemnity.

I have been the more explicit in this story, as, in the first place, it serves to shew that ladies were admitted to court in this early period : it also demonstrates, that men and women were never kept separate in England, as in Spain and other countries : it still evinces, that, however polite they might be at the time I am speaking of, there was still a savage air, that mixed in every action, and sufficiently distinguished those ages of barbarism from the civilized ages of Greece and Rome. But to stamp the age with still greater rudeness, Edgar, who was thus guilty of murder, sacrilege, and adultery, was placed among the number of saints, by the monks who have written his history.

The defects of Edgar's government fell upon his successors ; the power of the monks increased, and that of the state was diminished in proportion. Every provision for the safety of the kingdom be-

gan to decline ; and the remissness of the English made way for new incursions of the Danes, who exacted exorbitant tributes from the kings, and plundered the subjects at discretion. *A. D. 975.* Edward the Martyr, who had not the least title to so glorious an appellation, was crowned King by the single authority of Dunstan, and consequently increased monkish power : he was murdered by order of Elfrida, who seems to have the highest contrast, in her own person, of the greatest external charms, and the most odious internal deformity.

Ethelred II. finding himself unable to oppose the Danes, compounded with them for his safety : but, soon after, being strengthened by an alliance with the Duke of Normandy, he laid a detestible scheme for massacring all the Danes in the kingdom. This plot was carried on with such secrecy, that it was executed in one day, and all the Danes in England were destroyed without mercy. *A. D. 1002.* A massacre, so cruel and perfidious, instead of ending the long miseries of this wretched country, only made way for new and greater calamities than before.

Swayne, king of Denmark, exasperated by the slaughter of his countrymen, and among the rest, of his own sister, who was beheaded in Ethelred's presence, soon after landed in England, and filled the whole kingdom with the marks of an horrid vengeance, obliging Ethelred to fly to Normandy for relief. The English, unable to oppose, yet unwilling to submit, for a short time groaned under the Danish yoke, and again, upon an opportunity given, called their banished monarch back to his throne.

Ethelred returned, but being a weak, as well as a cruel prince, he lost the hearts of his subjects, and, with their love, all his authority. He never, therefore, could recover strength enough to oppose the forces and numbers of the Danes, to whom many of the English nobles, as well as commonalty, had, in his absence, submitted.

Swayne was the first Danish monarch who swayed the English sceptre, but he died before he could be said to come to a peaceable enjoyment of what he had so hardly toiled for. His son, Canute, however,

A. D. 1017. achieved what the father had begun. Edmund Ironside, elected by the English, who was his rival in government, and who succeeded Ethelred in this disputed sovereignty, continued, for a short time, to oppose the progress of the Danish conquests with success; but, Canute gaining a bloody victory over the forces of this monarch, he was obliged first to a division of the kingdom, and his untimely death, soon after, gave Canute quiet and undisturbed possession of the whole.

This fierce monarch cut off some of the royal Saxon line, and forced others into exile. He was at once king of England, Denmark, and Norway; and from the extent of his dominion, perhaps, rather, than from the greatness of his mind, received from historians the title of *Canute the Great*. The end of his life, however, was very different from the beginning: the first part of it was marked with invasion, rapine, and cruelty; the latter was equally remarkable for justice, humanity, and religion. Upon a certain occasion, being desirous of shewing his flatterers how little he deserved the exaggerated praise with which they loaded him, he ordered a chair to be brought, and, seated himself on the sea shore, where the tide was about to flow, he address-

ed the sea in this manner : *O sea, thou art under my dominion, and the land which I sit upon is mine; I charge thee, approach no further, nor dare to wet the feet of thy sovereign.* The tide, however, advancing as usual, he turned to his courtiers, and observed, that the titles of Lord and Master only belonged to him whom both earth and seas were ready to obey.

Harold Harefoot and Hardicanute, his Danish successors, were unworthy of him : the first is remarkable for no virtue, and the latter is distinguished, principally, for his cruelty and avarice. This last dying suddenly, at a feast, left the Danish race of kings so hated, by their exactions and impositions on the people, that Edward, surnamed the Confessor, of the Saxon race, found both from Danes and Saxons, an easy accession *A. D. 1042.* to the crown.

Thus expired, not only the dominion, but all attempts of invasion from the Danes for the future, Though their ravages had continued for above two hundred years, yet they left no change of laws, customs language, or religion. The many castles they had built, and the many families they left behind them, served alone to discover the places of their establishment. After the accession of Edward the Confessor to the crown, the English and Danes, as if wearied with mutual slaughter, united in support of government, and, peaceably living amongst each other, formed ever after but one people.

The reign of Edward the Confessor was long and happy. He had lived long in Normandy, and, in some measure, adopted the language and learning of that country. His wars were successful, both in Scotland and Wales, though managed by his leaders,

and with his personal attendance. The easiness of his disposition, however, together with his credulity and superstition, paved the way for another invasion of this country, as if the English were destined to be governed only by foreign masters.

Earl Godwin, by whose interest Edward had come to the crown, exerted all his influence to establish his own son, Harold, as his successor. This too powerful subject pretended to be much displeased at the favour shewn by the king to the Norman nobility, who came over, in numbers, to the English court. These discontents at length produced an insurrection. Edward, now grown old, and indolent by nature, undertook to oppose those disorders, rather by negotiation than arms. Treating with rebels is a certain method of increasing their power: by this means Harold gained, by degrees, the authority he contended for, and had power sufficient to settle the succession upon himself.

While Edward was thus leaving his earthly kingdom to contention and misery, he was, in the mean time, busily employed in gaining, as he imagined, a heavenly one. It was not sufficient for him to aspire at all the virtues necessary for carrying him to heaven; he desired to be reckoned a saint of the first order. He pretended to several revelations, was possessed of the gift of prophecy, and was the first who touched for those scrophulous disorders, which from hence, have been denominated the King's Evil. But what gained him a distinguished place among the saints, was his continence, his refraining from the woman to whom he was actually married. It is said he espoused the beautiful Editha, purely to exercise his virtues, by withstanding a continual temptation. This, as we may suppose, left her to

sterility; thus his leaving no issue was the cause of numberless miseries which fell upon the kingdom soon after his decease.

Edward, as I observed, had no children. He seemed, however, desirous of leaving the crown to his nephew Edgar Atheling: but, distrusting his ability to defend the title, and knowing the strength of Harold, his opponent, he left the succession undecided. It is probable, however this weak monarch was no way solicitous who succeeded in a government which he seemed himself to despise. A. D. 1066.

LETTER IX.

UPON the death of Edward, Harold now alleged that he was appointed successor by will. This was no more than what the people of England had expected long before: his pretensions were believed by some, and allowed by all. He had some right to a crown, hitherto elective, from his private virtues; and he confirmed his rights by the most irresistible argument, his power. Thus the monarch came to the throne by the most equitable of all titles; I mean the consent of the people. A. D. 1066.

His exaltation seemed only to be the commencement of his calamities. His first trouble was from his own brother, who, being the elder, obtained assistance from Norway, to set up a title to the English crown. Harold immediately levied a numerous army, and marched to meet the Norwegians, who, with a vast force, had over-run all

the northern parts of the kingdom, and had committed incredible devastation. Both armies soon joined battle. The Norwegians, for some time, bravely defended a bridge which lay between them and the English: but, at length, the valour of Harold surmounted every obstacle. He passed the bridge, renewed the assault, and after an obstinate resistance entirely routed the invaders. There had never before been seen in England an engagement between two such numerous armies, each having no less than threescore thousand men. The news of this victory diffused the greatest joy over the whole kingdom; but their raptures were soon suppressed by an information, that William of Normandy, surnamed the Conqueror, had Sept. 28, 1066. landed at Hastings, with a vast body of disciplined veterans, and laid claim to the English crown.

The prince was the natural son of Robert duke of Normandy; his mother's name was Arlette, a beautiful maid of Falaise, with whom Robert fell in love, as she stood gazing at her door whilst he passed through the town. William, who was the offspring of this amour, owed his greatness to his birth, and his fortunes to his personal merit. His body was vigorous, his mind capacious, and his courage not to be intimidated. His father Robert, growing old, and, as was usual with princes of that age, superstitious, resolved upon a pilgrimage to the holy sepulchre at Jerusalem. The nobility used every argument to dissuade him, but he persisted in his design. He shewed them William, whom, tho' illegitimate, he tenderly loved, recommending him to their care and loyalty. He then exacted their homage and fealty to this prince, who was not yet

above ten years old; and then put him under the tutelage of the French King, in whom he placed the highest confidence.

Robert, soon after going into Asia, and dying, left his son rather inheritor of his wishes than his crown. Our young soldier found himself exposed to many dangers, from his youth and inexperience, from the reproach of his birth, from a suspected guardian, a disputed title, and a distracted state. However, he surmounted all with uncommon fortitude, nor, till he had established peace, order, and tranquillity, in his own kingdom, did he turn his ambitious views abroad.

It has been already said, that Edward the Confessor resided for a long time at the court of Robert duke of Normandy; and upon this, William founded his claim. Whether gratitude might have engaged this exiled prince to make William his benefactor's son, any promises of the kingdom of England, after his decease, is at this distance of time uncertain: William, however, upon the death of Edward, immediately made his pretensions, and upon the former promise of Edward founded all the justice of his demand. To this he added, that Harold had himself assured him of his interest in the succession, when forced upon the Norman coast; he therefore sent to remind him of fulfilling his engagements.

Harold admitted of neither of these claims, and resolved to defend by his valour, what he had acquired by his intrigues. He was at the head of a large army, lately victorious, and now confident. He observed, that he had been elected by those only who had the power of placing kings on the throne, namely, by the people; and that he could not resign his crown without a breach of

that trust reposed in him by his constituents. He added to these reasons one of still greater weight ; he was possessed of power, and knew how to defend it.

William, who had landed his army at Hastings, in Suffex, at first made no appearance of invading an hostile country, but rather of encamping in his own. But he was soon roused from his inactivity, by the approach of Harold, who returned from the defeat of the Norwegians, with all the forces he had employed in that expedition, and all he could invite, or collect, in the country through which he passed. These were, in general, brave, active, and valiant troops, in high spirits, strongly attached to their king, and eager to engage. The army of William, on the other hand, consisted of the flower of all the continent : men of Bretagne, Brabant, Bologne, Flanders, Poictu, Maine, Orleans, France, and Normandy, were united under his command. He had long been familiar with conquest, and his troops were confident of his military capacity. England, never before, nor never since, saw two such armies drawn up to dispute its crown. The day before the battle ; William sent an offer to Harold, to decide the quarrel between them by single combat, and thus to spare the blood of their people ; but Harold refused, and said, he would leave it to God to determine. Both armies, therefore, that night pitched in sight of each other, expecting the next terrible day with solicitude : the English passed the night in songs and feasting ; the Normans, in devotions and prayer.

The next morning at seven, as soon as day appeared, both armies drew up in array against each other. Harold appeared leading on the

centre of the English army, on foot, that his men might be more encouraged by seeing their king exposed to equal danger with themselves. William fought on horseback, and commanded the body of reserve. The Normans began the fight with their cross bows : these at first galled and surprised the English, and, as their ranks were close, the arrows did great execution ; but when they came to close fight, the Normans were hewn down by the English bills, which, of all weapons, inflicted the most deep and ghastly wounds. William, endeavouring to pierce their ranks, assaulted them so often, and with such bravery, that he had three horses killed in the attempt. Perceiving that they still continued impenetrable, he now pretended to fly : this drew the English from their ranks, and he was instantly ready to take advantage of their disorder. Upon a signal given, the Normans returned to the charge with greater fury than before, broke the English troops, and pursued them to a rising ground. Harold now flew from rank to rank : though he had toiled all day from morning till now near night-fall, in the front of his Kentish men ; yet still he continued with unabated vigour to renew the fight, and exhort his men by his voice and example. The day now again seemed to turn against the victors, and the Normans fell in great numbers. The fierceness and obstinacy of this memorable battle was often renewed by the courage of the leaders, wherever that of the soldiers began to slacken. Fortune, at length determined a victory that valour was unable to decide : Harold, making a furious onset at the head of his troops, was shot into the brains by an arrow. All the courage of the English expired with their brave but unfortunate leader. He fell with his sword in

his hand, fighting for his country, amidst
the heaps of slain, so that the royal corpse
could hardly after the battle be distinguished
among the dead.

This was the end of the Saxon monarchy in England, which had continued for more than six hundred years. Before the times of Alfred, the kings seemed totally immersed in ignorance; and, after him, taken up with combating superstition, or blindly obeying its dictates. As for the crown, it was rather bequeathed by its possessor to whom he thought proper, than transmitted by hereditary and natural succession. As for the laws and customs of this race, they brought in many of their own, and adopted several belonging to the ancient Britons and Romans, which they found in the country upon their invasion. They assumed the names of Kings, nay, some of them took the Greek appellation of Basileus; titles unknown in the country from whence they came. Their earls were called Dukes, or Duces; a name borrowed from the Romans, and signifying captains. The lower class of people were bought and sold with the farms they cultivated; a custom first introduced by the conquerors of the world, and which subsists, in some countries where the Roman laws continue, to this day. Their canon laws, also, at that time, were often mixed with the civil laws, and were equally coercive: but these canon laws had their origin from Rome, and the priests and monks, who drew them up, generally had their education there. We must not, therefore, ascribe all the laws and customs, which at that time prevailed over England, to a Saxon original, since they were, in some cases, derived from the Britons and Ro-

mans. But now all those customs and laws, of whatever original, were cast down into one common mass, and cemented by those of Norman institution. The whole face of obligation was changed, and new masters and new forms observed. The laws were improved, but the taste of the people for polite learning, arts, and philosophy, for more than four hundred years to come, were still to continue the same. It is indeed surprising, that, in such a variety of events, such innovations in manners, and such changes in government, true politeness never came to be cultivated. Perhaps the reason may be, that the people suffered themselves to be instructed only by the clergy, and the clergy have a certain standard of politeness which they never go beyond, and at which they were arrived at the time we are speaking of. A monk of the tenth century, and a monk of the eighteenth century, are equally enlightened, and equally fit to promote the arts of happiness.

LETTER X.

WE now enter upon that part of the English history which gives birth to our present happy constitution. Those laws which are so much esteemed by the rest of Europe, those liberties which are so dear to us at home, began to dawn at this period. The English, hitherto almost unknown to the rest of the world, began, after this revolution, to make a considerable figure in Europe. The variety of dispositions of several foreign countries, being imported here, blended into one common national cha-

racter, and produced sentiments of courage, freedom, resolution, and pride.

Immediately after the victory of Hastings, in which, it is said, sixty thousand English were slain, the conqueror marched towards London. He carried before him a standard which had been blessed by the Pope, and to this all the clergy quickly resorted. The bishops and magistrates of the metropolis came out to meet him, and offered him a crown which they no longer had in their power to refuse. William was glad of thus peaceably being put in possession of a throne which several of his predecessors had not gained but by repeated victories; he complied with the terms which were offered him, and, among these terms, it is to be presumed, the church's interests were not forgotten. Though William had it in his power to force the people into a compliance with his views, yet he chose to have their election of him confirmed as a voluntary gift of their own. He knew himself to be their conqueror; he desired to be thought their lawful king.

Thus was William possessed of an idea of his power to enforce obedience, and the English of their generosity in having frequently presented him with a crown. Impressed with such opposite sentiments, the one was inclined to oppress a people whom he, in fact, thought incapable of resistance: and they, on the other hand, were inclined to revolt against him, whom they fancied to have received all authority from their own hands. Numberless, therefore were the insurrections of the English against their new Monarch: and every suppressed rebellion only gave fresh instances of the conqueror's

mildness and humanity. The English were unwilling to pay any taxes towards enriching those they now began to look upon as conquerors ; and William was under the most solemn engagements of providing for those adventurers who had left their native country to place him on the throne.

Hitherto William had acted like one who was rather the father than the invader of the country, when news was brought him, that a body of Northumbrian English, assisted by the Danes, had set upon the Norman garrison in York castle, and put every man to the sword. After repeated rebellions, which he had quelled before, and such frequent pardons, which were the consequence, he now found that nothing but rigour would do for the future. He marched therefore to meet the enemy, bought off the Danes for a sum of money, and took a signal revenge upon the Northumbrians, unable to oppose him.

From this time he seems to have regarded England rather as a conquest than a justly acquired dominion. His diffidence of the English became more conspicuous every day and his partiality to the Normans more galling : all places of trust and confidence were taken from the one, and given to the other. From this time he thought only of establishing himself on the throne, without nicely examining whether the means were consonant to justice and humanity.

If historians, who seem partial in other respects, are to be credited, England was then in a most deplorable situation. The Normans committed continual insults on the conquered people, and they seldom found any redress from their governors : in both cases, therefore, they generally revenged them-

selves by private murders, and a day seldom passed but the bodies of assassinated Normans were found in the woods and highways, without any possibility of bringing the perpetrators to justice. But what is represented as the peculiar grievance of the times was, that the English were deprived of arms, and were forbid having any lights in their houses after eight o'clock in the evening. At this hour a bell was rung to warn them to put out their fire and candle; and this which was called the Curfew, is a custom very common upon the continent; but was very grating to the ears of this people.

Insurrections are ever the consequence of oppression, in a brave nation: William was sensible of this, and generally attempted to moderate the cruel counsels of his countrymen by gentle treatment of the offenders. Edgar Atheling, who had the best successive right to the crown, was amongst the number of those who experienced his lenity and faith. This prince had gone over to the Scots, and had persuaded their king to join him with an army in asserting his right to the English crown. William met their forces in the northern parts of England, and, instead of a battle, proposed a negotiation. Peace was established between the two nations, and Edgar was included in the treaty. He continued from that time to live as a private man, in opulence and security, and passed the rest of his life, perhaps more happily than if he had continued in the career of ambition.

William, having nothing at present to fear from war, turned all his thoughts to the arts of peace. He was not yet sufficiently arbitrary to change all the laws now in being for those of his own country: he only made several innovations, and

ordered all law pleas, in the several courts, to be made in the Norman language. These precautions, instead of making the Norman language the study of all, confined the law to the peculiar study of a few. The English language still continued to be spoken; and such was the esteem it was held in, even so early, that it began to be spoken at the court of Scotland; and in several adjacent countries: and, what is very remarkable, never was the French less engrafted upon our language, than at this very time when they were our masters.

William now thought proper to deprive bishops of all judgment in civil causes, which they had enjoyed during the whole Saxon succession, from their conversion to Christianity. He restrained the clergy to the exercise of their ecclesiastical power alone. He endeavoured to abolish trials by *ordeal* and *camp-fight*. The ordeal trial, which has been a remainder of Pagan superstition, and still was held in veneration by the Saxons, was either by fire or water. It was used in criminal cases where the suspicions were, strong, but the proofs not evident. In that of fire, the person accused was brought into an open plain, and several ploughshares, heated red hot, were placed at equal distances before him: over these he was to walk blindfold, and if he escaped unhurt, he was acquitted of the charge. In the other trial of water, the accused was thrown bound into the water, if he sunk, he was declared innocent; but if he swam, guilty.

The trial by *camp-fight* was another instance of the deplorable barbarity of the times. This was performed by single combat, in lists, appointed for that purpose, between the accuser and the accused;

he that, in such case, came off victorious, was deemed innocent; and he who was conquered, if he survived his antagonist's resentment in the field, was sure to suffer as a malefactor sometime after. Both these trials this king abolished as unchristian and unjust, and reduced all causes to the judgement of twelve men, of a rank nearly equal to that of the prisoner. This number was called a jury, and this was a method of trial common to the Saxons and Normans long before, but confirmed by him with all the sanction of royalty.

Having continued thirteen years in England, he now thought of revisiting his native dominions, but no sooner was his back turned than a new conspiracy was set on foot. This was more terrible, as it was carried on by the joint counsels of Normans as well as English. Several lords of both nations, already possessed of opulence, were desirous of independence also, and pretended many grievances, or imagined themselves aggrieved. The earl Walthof, who had been formerly pardoned for a like offence, entered secretly into a correspondence with Swayne, King of Denmark, and Drone, King of Ireland. Their measures were conceived with caution, and pursued with secrecy; but some delays intervening were fatal to counsels which were necessarily entrusted to many; the plot was discovered some days before the Danes arrived; the heads of the conspiracy were taken, and Fitz Auber, a noble Norman, and Walthof, were beheaded on this occasion. Whether this act of rigour was executed by the king's command, sent over from Normandy, or by Odo, his brother, left behind, and naturally inclined to severity, is not apparent. However, these two were

the only noblemen executed in England during the reign of William the Conqueror, notwithstanding so many revolts on their side, and so much power in him to punish.

Though good fortune seemed to attend this monarch thus far on his reign, here the curtain may be drawn for the rest. His decline was marked with domestic quarrels, which could neither end in glory nor in gain: his endeavours were opposed by his own subjects, for whom he had laboured with such perseverance. He had four sons, Robert, Richard, William, and Henry, besides several daughters. The most poignant of his distresses must, therefore, come from that quarter where he least expected an attack, and was least guarded to oppose. His eldest son Robert, encouraged by the King of France, pretended a right to possess Normandy, even during the life of his father. William could place confidence in none but the English, to bring this unnatural son to his duty; and, drawing an army of Englishmen together, he passed over into Normandy, to put a stop to the progress of so unexpected an insurrection. It is remarkable enough, that the same commander, who formerly led over an army of Normans to conquer England, now returned with an army of English to subdue Normandy. To reduce his son, however, was found a much more difficult task than William had at first expected. Robert seemed to inherit, though not his father's virtues, at least his conduct and intrepidity. He led on his troops with courage, and laid his ambuscades with secrecy: in one of these, after he had killed part of a troop of English and put the rest to flight, he boldly advanced against the main body, where William commanded in person. By a

strange fatality of circumstances, the father and son were opposed, without knowing each other. William was now grown old, and unable to perform those extraordinary feats, for which he was once so famous. The son charged with such fury, that his aged father fell to the ground with the blow : death would have inevitably been the consequence, and the son's arm was just lifted up to strike his father, had not William called out, and Robert immediately recollected his father's voice. At once stung with a consciousness of his crime, and his duty, he leaped from his horse, and raised the fallen monarch from the ground ; then, prostrating himself in his presence, he asked pardon for his offences, and promised, for the future, an adherence to his duty. The king moved by the impulse of nature, took once more his long lost son to his arms ; and the armies, spectators of this moving scene, participated in their joy and reconciliation.

But this submission of Robert was of no long continuance ; he once had tasted the sweets of power, and knew not how to submit to subordination : again, therefore, he revolted, and again was pardoned by his indulgent father. But the French, who inspired him to these acts of disobedience, and were at best insidious allies, particularly felt the vehemence of William's displeasure. After he had adjusted the government of England, to which he was returned some time before, he again led over a brave army of Englishmen into Normandy, intent to make the storm fall upon those who were primarily the disturbers of his tranquillity. The king of France rightly considered, that this armament could only be designed against himself, and attempted to divert it by a truce, which was agreed on ; but

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

a jest of the French king served to renew hostilities. William had been confined to his bed by an indisposition, which, added to his natural corpulency, threatened the most dangerous consequences. This was a situation which it was cruelty to ridicule; however the Frenchman, with a levity natural to his nation, observed that the king of England was lying-in of a big belly. This raised William's indignation to such a pitch, that he immediately took the field, where leaping a ditch, the pommel of the saddle bruised his belly, and gave him a rupture. This, added to his former bad habit of body, brought on a mortification, of which he died.

The characters of princes are best seen in their actions, nor is it necessary to give an outline at the end of what the historian has painted more strongly in his narration. There is scarce a great quality which this monarch does not seem eminently to have possessed; and considering the morality of the times, scarce a good one in which he was entirely deficient. The only objections of any weight are his avarice, and his depopulating a part of his country, in order to make a forest to hunt in for his amusement. The avarice of kings, at that time, was different from what it is now. Kings acquired money then for the uses of the public; kings acquire fortunes now only for themselves: the wars of the state were then supplied by the treasures of the crown: the wars of the state at present are supplied by finances appropriated to that purpose by the people. His making so extensive a forest can be vindicated only from the barbarity of the times; a method rather of making his guilt, general, than of wiping it away. Upon the whole however, England seemed to improve by the conquest, and lost neither its name nor its language.

It increased in strength and naval power; its laws became more numerous and rational; the manner of living, among the natives, more elegant and expensive; and the superstition of the clergy less gross and absurd.

LETTER XI.

FEW nations have gone through more revolutions, few governments have appeared more unsteady, or fluctuated more between prerogative and privilege, than this of Great Britain. The English have been surpris'd, betrayed, forced into situations little preferable to downright slavery; but those convulsions, though they have disordered the frame, yet could not destroy the principles of a free constitution.

We have seen the Norman alter the whole model of government, but he was unable to extinguish the Saxon spirit of freedom which formed its ground-work: on the contrary, the Normans, and other strangers who settled here, were soon seized with a spirit of liberty themselves, instead of being able to communicate their native principles of slavery.

William left three sons; Robert, to whom he bequeathed his dukedom of Normandy; William Rufus, who had the newly acquired kingdom of England; and Henry, who was put in possession of the greatest part of his personal treasures.

William Rufus, upon coming to the crown had two very powerful parties to oppose
A. D. and to humble. The nobility, who,
 1087. aspired to the same degree of freedom which

they possessed under the Saxon kings ; and the clergy, who desired to erect themselves into a distinct government, independent of secular power. One or the other of these claims gave rise to the insurrections and discontents of this reign. Nothing can be more easy than to imagine, how ill a people who thought themselves free, must brook a monarch who looked upon them as his property, by a succession originally founded in conquest.

Odo, his own uncle, was the first to dispute his title ; but he was soon taken prisoner, and some time after contrived means of flying into Normandy, where he found protection and honour from duke Robert. This was a sufficient pretext for William to make war upon his brother : it was carried on with vigour and success. Henry the third brother was also involved in this war, separately, and upon his own account, having taken up arms for not being paid the treasures bequeathed him by his father. Thus were there three different armies, each exasperated against the other, and each led on by one of those disunited brothers. Such an unnatural contest, as may be easily conceived, served only to weaken themselves and strengthen their enemies. The Scotch and Welch, therefore took this opportunity of making several incursions upon the English, while William was thus pursuing conquests that could end neither in advantage nor fame. To increase the confusion, the clergy loudly complained of encroachments upon their privileges ; the people murmured at every increase of their taxes : Robert de Mowbray was actually taken prisoner, while he commanded a fortress that had shaken off the royal authority. What effects these discontents, which were increased also by the king's avarice, intemperance, and prodigality, might have

produced, is uncertain ; the most melancholy were expected : but now the attention of Europe was called off to one of the most remarkable events that history can produce ; I mean the arming for the first crusade.

Peter, surnamed the Hermit, who had beheld, with indignation, the cruel manner to which the infidels, who were in possession of the Holy Sepulchre, treated the Christians who went on pilgrimages thither, returned to Europe, resolved to inspire the princes of Christendom with a zeal for its recovery. Bareheaded and barefoot, he travelled from court to court, preaching as he went, and inflaming the zeal of every rank of people. Pope Urban II. preached the crusade himself at the counsel of Clermont ; and numberless persons, of all degrees and nations, ardently embraced the cause, and put on the red cross, the badge of their profession. Among the number was Robert, duke of Normandy ; he was brave, zealous, fond of glory, and still more fond of change.

In order to supply money to defray the necessary charges of so expensive an undertaking, he offered to mortgage his dukedom with his brother for a stipulated sum. William eagerly embraced the proposal. He was no way solicitous about raising the money agreed on, for he knew the riches of his clergy ; heedless, therefore, of their murmurs, he rigorously levied the whole, making use of the most pious pretences to cover his extortion. Thus sending his brother to the Holy Land, he took peaceable possession of his dukedom.

In this manner was Normandy again united to the English crown ; and from this union, afterwards arose those wars with France, which, for whole centuries, continued to depopulate both nations,

without conducing in the end to the enriching of either.

William was not a little pleased with this unexpected acquisition; and, as one success only produces a desire for more, he began to conceive more extensive schemes of ambition. Poictu and Guienne were offered to be mortgaged for the same reasons as Normandy. William immediately raised the necessary sums, but death interrupted the payment. Happening to hunt in that forest, from whence his father had banished the husbandman and legal possessor, he was accidentally shot through the heart, with an arrow, by one Tyrell: he died in the forty-fourth year of his age, had *A. D. 1100.* reigned twelve, and left a dominion which he had contributed to extend, to impoverish, and enslave.

There were now two competitors for the crown: Robert, who was engaged in the Holy War; and Henry, the youngest brother, who remained at home. The right of succession was evidently in favour of the first, but the latter was upon the spot. Nothing can be a more evident instance how little hereditary succession was minded at that time, than that Henry's title prevailed, and that he was elected by the joint acclamations of the people. Whenever there is a disputed throne, the people generally regain their liberty. Henry, knowing the weakness of his pretensions to the crown, was resolved to strengthen his power, by gaining the affections of the people: he therefore, once more confirmed the ancient Saxon laws, and indulged the clergy in all their former privileges.

Upon Robert's return from the Holy Land, where he refused to be crowned king of Jerusalem, he found himself deprived, in his absence,

of a kingdom which he considered as his birthright. His attempts, however, to recover it were without success. This prince seemed only born to be the sport of fortune: his bravery, his generosity, and a thousand other good qualities, of which he was possessed, served to render him the dupe of every deceiver, and the instrument of opposing villany. At one time we behold him prosecuting his pretensions with spirit; at another, giving up the just claim with vicious generosity. Thus, after a life spent in toil, fatigue, and ambition, he found himself, at last, utterly deprived, not only of his patrimonial dukedom, but of his fortune, his freedom and friends. He saw Normandy fall to the conqueror, And, to add to his misfortunes, he at last languished, for twenty-six years of his life, a prisoner in Cardiff castle, in Wales, where he died in captivity. To want prudence is, in some measure, to want virtue.

Henry, having acquired possession of Normandy, might now be said to be master of a theatre where many a succeeding tragedy was to be performed; and soon his neighbour of France began to shew his jealousy of so powerful a rival. Those wars now began which were to be so fatal to distant posterity. The ravages of the French were at first neglected, and Henry remained a quiet spectator in England, as if unprovoked at their insolence; but soon he shewed, that his unwillingness to engage was by no means the effect of fear. He passed into Normandy with a powerful army, and offered the enemy battle: the challenge was soon accepted, and a furious combat ensued. During the fight, a French cavalier, named Crispin, personally attacked the king of England, and struck him twice on the head, with such force, that all his armour streamed

with an effusion from the wound. The king, however, no way intimidated, continued the single combat with resolution, and summoning all his strength, discharged such a blow at his adversary, as threw him from his horse, so that he became the prisoner of the king's own hand. This decided the victory in favour of the English, who pursued the French with great slaughter, which hastened the peace that was concluded soon after.

Fortune now seemed to smile upon Henry, and promised a long succession of felicity : he was in peaceable possession of two powerful states, and had a prince for undisputed heir, now arrived at his sixteenth year, a youth of great hopes : all his enemies were humbled, and many actually in his own power : Matilda, his daughter, was married to the emperor Henry IV. and he had the hearts of the greatest number of his subjects, particularly the English. All his prospects, however, were at once clouded by an unforeseen misfortune ; an accident which tinged his remaining life with misery. Henry returning victorious from abroad, brought with him a numerous retinue of the chief nobility. In one of the vessels of the fleet, his son and several young noblemen, his companions, went together to render the passage more agreeable. The young prince desirous of being first ashore, promised the seamen a reward, if they came in foremost. This emulation was fatal to them all : the pilot ran the ship upon a rock, and immediately she was dashed to pieces. The prince, however was put into the boat, and would have escaped, had he not been called back by the cries of Maude, his natural sister. He was now out of danger himself, but could not leave her to perish. He prevailed upon the sailors to row back to take her

in ; the approach of the boat giving others an opportunity to attempt saving their lives, several leaped in also, so that the boat was overloaded, and all, except one, went to the bottom. When Henry was informed of the catastrophe of his only son, he covered his face, and never laughed after.

The rest of his life seems a mere blank : his restless ambition had nothing now to toil for. His daughter, Matilda, however becoming a widow, he married her a second time to Geoffry of Plantagenet, and, when brought to bed of a son, named Henry, he caused the nobility to take an oath of succession in her favour. The great men of those times were ready to swear whatever the monarch commanded, but observed it no longer than while they were obliged to obey. He did not long survive this attempt to confirm this succession : he died,

A. D. 1135. as it is said, of a surfeit, caused by eating lampreys, in the sixty-eighth year of his age, having reigned thirty-six.

It is strange, that historians impute it as a fault to several English monarchs of those times, that they came to the crown without hereditary claims to support their title : this is one of the faults alledged against Henry ; but it is none, if we consider the usual spirit of other successions.

During the reign of Henry, the barons and the clergy were growing into power : each was a petty tyrant over those who held under him. In order therefore, to confirm privileges so lately acquired, they joined in electing a king, who might owe to them, and not to any previous claim, his prerogative and sceptre. With such intentions they pitched upon Stephen, nephew to the deceased king : and, as for their oaths to Matilda, the bishops gave them an absolution. They could not, indeed, have made

a properer choice than him whom they elected : but their conduct proceeded only from a concern for themselves, and not for the people. Stephen was ready enough to consent to all their exorbitant demands : he acknowledged the crown as their gift, and not his just inheritance ; and confirmed all the immunities, privileges, and claims of the clergy.

The kingdom now began to wear the face of an aristocracy, in which the barons and clergy might be said to command. They built castles, fortified and garrisoned them with their own troops, from whence, when offended, they would bid their monarch defiance. Of all miseries that ever affected kingdoms, an uncontrouled power among the great is certainly the most afflictive, The tyranny of a single monarch only falls upon the narrow circle round him ; the arbitrary will of a number of delegates falls most heavily upon the lower ranks of people, who have no redress. In short, the barons clamoured for their own privileges, the clergy for their own liberty, but the people were slaves.

Stephen was sensible of this, and in order to diminish their power, possessed himself, by force of some of their castles, which were incompatible with the safety of the kingdom.

Thus we may discern three different contending powers at this time ; the king and his followers, the barons and their adherents, and the clergy, assisted by the generality of the people ; to these was soon added a fourth, Matilda, who claimed the crown in pursuance of Henry's command. This haughty woman, who had been wife to an emperor, and still seemed to retain a consciousness of her dignity, landed from Normandy, accompanied only by a few followers and openly laid claim to the crown. Mean time, Stephen, being informed of her arrival,

flew to besige Arundel, a castle belonging to the queen dowager, where Matilda had taken up her residence. This fortrefs did not seem to promise a long defence, and would have been soon taken, had it not been represented to him, that, as this was a castle belonging to the queen dowager, it would be an infringement of the respect due to her to attempt taking it by force. There was a spirit of generosity prevalent in the times I treat of, which was unknown to their degenerate posterity. Stephen permitted Matilda to come out, and conveyed her in safety to Bristol, another fortrefs equally strong with that from whence he permitted her to retire.

It is a deplorable consideration, that our virtues, often, instead of being attended with happy consequences, are found fatal to such as adhere to them without deviation. Matilda owing her freedom merely to the generosity of the king, made no other use of it but to levy an army against him ; and this army, at length proved victorious. During the continuance of this civil war, the whole kingdom was divided ; pillage and desolation were the consequence, whoever happened to be conqueror.

It was at length however, determined by a decisive victory obtained over the king. The troops he led were in general, foriegn mercenaries, and commanded by tumultuous barons, more accustomed to command than to conquer. His horse gave way, and his infantry, being destitute of their assistance, soon followed their example, and deserted their king. All the race of the Norman conquerors were brave : Stephen unknowing how to fly, was left alone, and fought on foot in the midst of the field of battle, assaulted by multitudes, and resisted all their efforts with astonishing valour. Had his horse then rallied, he might have come off victorious. He was

hemmed in on every side, but with his battle-ax made way for some time : that breaking, he drew his sword, and dealt his blows round the circle in which he was inclosed. At length, after performing more than could naturally be expected from a single arm, his sword flying in pieces, he was obliged to surrender himself a prisoner. In this manner, he was conducted by the conqueror from the field, and ignominiously laid in irons.

Matilda was now proclaimed queen, and, for some time, her power was acknowledged by the generality of the nation. But, as she disdained to accept the shadow of royalty, which was all the barons and the clergy intended to grant, she disgusted them by her pride, and soon made those repent who had raised her from their levity. The bishop of Winchester seems, at this time, to have been possessed of unbounded power. He had been chiefly instrumental in raising her to the throne ; he now, therefore, levied an army, to convince her, that it was no less in his power to deprive her of a kingdom, than to put her in possession of it. He was successful in his designs : Matilda was obliged to quit England once more, and Stephen was taken from chains, and once more placed upon the throne.

Again put in possession of this uneasy seat, he seemed only exalted to give new instances of his refusing the exorbitant demands of the barons and the clergy. He endeavoured to get the crown to devolve upon his son ; but this was not complied with by the bishops. It is said, though it has scarcely the appearance of truth, that he confined them in one house, and there threatened to detain them, till they complied with his will. This was an extraordinary method of obtaining their consent, and seems inconsistent with his usual wisdom ; his precautions,

accordingly, proved unsuccessful, and the archbishop found means to escape his guards, and fly into Normandy, in order to bring over a new king, and to raise a new insurrection.

In consequence of this bishop's intrigues, Henry, son to the empress Matilda, and who had been long acknowledged for duke of Normandy, soon landed with a formidable army. The barons ever restless and regardless of their obligation, were again divided upon this occasion, and a terrible civil war threatened the kingdom afresh, when happily for the people, a truce was proposed between the opposite powers: this paved the way to a more lasting peace. It was agreed, that Stephen should enjoy the crown of England during his life, and that Henry should be acknowledged as his successor. In this manner a civil war was terminated, which had, for some years laid England in blood. The nation once more began to respire from their calamities, and Stephen's death soon put his rival in possession of a crown, which, to the former, had afforded only disappointment, fatigue and danger.

LETTER. XII,

WE have hitherto seen the barons and clergy become powerful in proportion to the weakness of the monarch's title to the crown, and enriching themselves with the spoils of depressed majesty. Henry Plantagenet had now every right, both from hereditary succession and universal assent, that could fix a monarch on his throne : conscious therefore of his strength, he began to resume those privileges which had been extorted from his predecessor's weakness. *A. D.* 1160.

He first commenced by demolishing those castles which the barons and clergy built, and which only served as sanctuaries to guilt, treason, and debauchery : he dismissed the foreign troops which had been mercenaries to his predecessor, and perceiving the poverty of the crown, resumed all those lands which properly belonged to it ; he enacted some laws, by which the people, in some measure, became independent of their barons, by whom they were claimed as appurtenances to their estates and manors.

He gave charters to several towns, by which the citizens claimed their freedom and privileges, independent of any superior but himself. These charters may properly be called the groundwork of English liberty. The struggles heretofore were, whether a monarchy, or an aristocracy, should prevail ; whether the king, or the nobility, only ; but, by this grant, the lowest orders of the people began to have a just value for themselves, and to claim the prerogatives of humanity. Thus was the feudal go-

vernment first impaired: liberty began to be diffused more equally upon every rank of people, and the kings became capable of levying armies independent of their vassals.

But, though he in some measure, diminished the power of the barons, by enlarging that of the people, yet still there was a third power, namely the clergy, which daily grew stronger, and united by one bond, pursuing the same design, were making large strides to independence. He undertook to humble them also. He perceived the clergy were resolved, not only to be exempt from the usual taxes of the state, but even its punishments. They had extorted an immunity from all but ecclesiastical censures in the preceding reign, and continued to maintain that grant in the present. It may be easily supposed, that a law, which thus screened their guilt, served but to increase it, accordingly, more than an hundred murders, upon proof, were committed by the clergy, of which not one was punished, even with degradation. What is still more astonishing, the bishops gloried in their horrid indulgence. Among the number of murderers who were pardoned was a clergyman of the diocese of Sarum. The complaint was brought before the archbishop's court, and the circumstances of his guilt appeared most atrocious. However, the only punishment decreed was, that the murderer should be deprived of his benefice, and confined to a monastery. The king, struck with horror at such injustice, reproached the archbishop, who, on the other hand, asserted, that an ecclesiastic could not be punished with death, and that the king had no right to intermeddle in the affairs of the church. This archbishop was the noted Thomas a Becket, who had been advanced,

by the king to this high station from the meanest obscurity. He was a man of strong passions, great pride and great zeal, which had been in the early part of life, smothered in deep dissimulation and apparent humility. He was, at this time, possessed at once of the chancellorship, of the archbishoprick of Canterbury, and was legate to the holy see. These were great trusts; but what rendered him still more powerful, he either thought himself a saint or affected to be thought so: he wore sackcloth next his skin, and his equipage and diet were mean and simple. So much power, pride, and seeming humility, united, were formidable; and such Henry found them.

The king proposed, in a council of the nobles, that the bishops should not be permitted to go to Rome; that no subject should appeal to the holy see; that no officer of the crown should be excommunicated, or suspended, without the Sovereign's permission; and lastly, (which was the great article he aimed at,) that the clergy should be subject to the temporal judges, as well as the rest of his subjects. Such just propositions were agreed to by all present, even Becket hesitated not to sign his name. They were referred next to the Pope for his approbation: the pope disapproved of them all. Upon this, therefore, Becket declared his repentance, for having complied with the king in signing the constitutions of Clarendon, as they were called; and, in order to carry on the farce, suspended himself, as unworthy to perform his functions till the pope should be pleased to absolve him.

This pardon he quickly obtained, and now he set no bounds to his obstinacy and ambition. Some historians describe Becket as a saint, and some as a designing hypocrite; neither are probably, just in

their opinions. He pursued with inflexibility, what was in fact wrong, but what education and the manners of the times, had taught him to believe was right: his errors were rather of judgment than of will.

The king was resolved to humble a man who had, by his authority, been lifted into power, and accused him of embezzling the public money, while chancellor. While the judges were consulting, Becket insolently entered the council, with a crozier in his hand, to intimidate his judges; but notwithstanding this boldness, he was condemned as a traitor, altho' he found means of avoiding punishment by escaping into Flanders.

The popes had long been growing formidable to the kings of England. Alexander III. immediately espoused Becket's quarrel, and brought the king to consent to a conference, which came to nothing: another succeeded, but with as little success; a third was proposed and accepted. The king wearied out with the repeated threats of the pope, and the excommunications of his clergy, consented to almost every thing the haughty prelate demanded. But when all the articles were settled, and Becket was to give the king the kiss of peace; he took it into his head to say, that it was for God's honour; the king insisted that this expression should be retracted: Becket insisted upon using it: this renewed the debate, and the conference ended once more without effect.

At length, however, after an interval of some years, they were reconciled, and the archbishop made his entry into London, amidst the acclamations of the populace. His pride was now increased by success, and he went from town to town in a sort of triumphal cavalcade. But he was

scarcely reinstated in his power, when he began to exert it to the utmost extent : he solemnly excommunicated two lords who had opposed him, and published the pope's letters for the suspension of several bishops who had shewn themselves his enemies. The king, who was in Normandy, soon received information of this prelate's pride and popularity, and soon after, the suspended bishops came over to lay their complaints before him : throwing themselves at his feet, they implored his protection, and inveighed against their oppressor. Henry was now quite exasperated by their complaints : and continually uneasy from the repeated instances of Becket's insolence, was heard to say, *Is there none to revenge their monarch's cause upon this audacious priest ?* These words seemed to arm the most resolute of his attendants ; and four knights whose names were Hugh Norvil, William Tracy, Hugh Brito, and Richard Fitzurse, hastened to Canterbury and entering the cathedral, where Becket was officiating, with a few attendants, they beat out his brains, with clubs, at the foot of the altar.

His death confirmed those privileges to the clergy which his opposition could not do. His resolution, during his life, and his resignation, when dying, gained the hearts of the people. He was looked upon as a martyr, and the clergy took care to confirm his sanctity by miracles. When the people are resolved to see miracles, they are seldom disappointed : it was not sufficient that his shrine had a power of restoring dead men to life ; it restored also cows, dogs, and horses. It was reported, and believed, that he rose from his coffin before he was buried, to light the tapers designed for his funeral ; and, when the funeral ceremony was over, that

he stretched forth his hand to bless the people. Thus Becket became a saint, and Henry was suspected of being the author of his assassination.

In order to divert the attention of the public from suspicions of this nature. Henry undertook the conquest of Ireland; a project formed some years before, but deferred on account of his long protracted quarrel. The more readily to gain the pope's approbation of his undertaking, (for nothing could then be achieved without the sanction of Rome,) he cleared himself by oath, of being any way privy to the assassination, and made a solemn vow to go to Becket's tomb, there to receive the discipline of the church.

Thus furnished with Pope Adrian's bull, which, granted him a kingdom which was not his to give, he subdued Ireland with a rapidity equal to his most sanguine hopes; but it was no hard matter to conquer a country which was at that time barbarous and divided under different chiefs, and each pursuing different views and interests.

But the happiness this monarch received from this accession of power, was soon allayed by a conspiracy in his own family. Among the few vices of this monarch, unlimited gallantry was one. His queen was disagreeable, and he was faithless: but though an admirer of all the sex, he singled out, with particular affection, Rosamond Clifford, a lady of matchless beauty. Historians and poets talk of the fair Rosamond in the warmest strains of rapture. If what they say be true, never did England produce so much beauty united with so much grace before. He kept her concealed in a labyrinth at Woodstock Park, and, in her company, passed his hours of vacancy and pleasure. But

the queen at length came to a knowledge of his amour, and, pursuing her happy rival to her retreat, guided, say some, by a clue of silk, she obliged her to take poison.

As this was an offence which the queen could not be forgiven, she was resolved not to forgive. Her sons were soon brought to share her resentments, and a conspiracy was formed, abetted by all the malecontents of the kingdom. To this unnatural combination, Henry opposed his usual prudence and resolution: he seemed on every side assaulted, but every where came off victorious. Ascribing, however, the opposition of his own children to the indignation of offended heaven, he was resolved, by an exemplary penance, to conciliate its favour.

Now was the time in which the clergy were to come off victorious; this was the season in which they were to reap the labours of their martyred defender; and by one weak action the king was now to cancel that firmness, which a great part of his life had been employed in bringing to ripeness. Being come within sight of Canterbury, he walked barefoot to Becket's tomb, in extreme pain: there he was scourged by the monks, and spent the whole night upon the pavement. The monks were thus reinstated again in all their claims, and the people involved in greater superstition than before.

This penance, however, no way served to reconcile him to his family; he even cursed their ingratitude, and, wearied with domestic contention, resolved, at last to undertake a crusade. His son Richard, however, still pursuing the dictates of ambition rather than of nature, deprived him of all power to put this design into execution. Passion and disappointment, therefore, began to make

visible depredations on his constitution, and mark him for the grave: he fell sick at Chinon, in Normandy, and, finding his end approach, he caused himself to be carried into the church, before the altar, where he expired with scarce a single attendant to deplore his fall.

LETTER XIII.

WHEN I compare the English, at this period, with the neighbouring nations, I can't avoid remarking in them a peculiar degree of courage, generosity and politeness. They had during the Saxon kings, sunk into bigotry and effeminacy; but a mixture of the Norman fierceness improved their characters, and rendered them at once valiant and merciful.

You have seen Henry, as well as all his Norman predecessors, improve those good qualities in his subjects not less by influence than example. You have seen him attempting to increase the freedom of the people by corporation charters, and to diminish the power of the barons by weakening the feudal government, by which the peasants and husbandmen were slaves. In these designs he succeeded; but he failed in his endeavours of lessening the power of the clergy. The kingdom at his decease, therefore assumed a different appearance from what it wore before his accession. The people now began to have some, though but a small share of power; the barons had still vast authority, though less than formerly; while the clergy might be considered as a body entirely distinct from the rest of the com-

munity, governed by their own laws, and professing subjection only to the pope.

In this situation were affairs, when Richard, the son of Henry, came by succession to the government, in which his reign *A. D. 1189.* made no material alteration. The priests being the most powerful body of men, it is not surprising to find the king seconding their schemes, which perhaps be found impossible to oppose. Religion was then the pretext for every sinister action, obedience to the church the only rule of merit; and to oppose the enemies of Christianity, was preached up as an antidote for every former transgression. The kingdom of Palestine had been, for some time the theatre of war and had drained Europe of its most chosen troops, which fell like leaves in autumn, either by pestilence, famine, or the sword. In this quarrel the clergy found means to embark the king, by awakening his ambition, and strengthening his natural superstition. A romantic desire for strange adventures and an immoderate zeal for the external parts of Christianity, were the ruling passions of the times, and they easily became the ruling passions of Richard.

Impressed with a desire of rescuing the Holy Land from the infidels, he left England, and with a numerous army passed through France, took Cyprus from a Christian prince, landed in Palestine, overcame Saladine with a slaughter of forty thousand Saracens, took several cities from the infidels, and gained much reputation for conduct and personal bravery; yet, after all, he acquired no real advantage for himself, or the cause in which he was engaged. Having concluded a truce for three years with Saladine, he set sail on his return; but

his ships being dispersed by a tempest, he was obliged to land upon the coasts of Italy, where pursuing his way homeward by land, he was arrested by the duke of Austria, and put in the power of the emperor, who cruelly and ungenerously detained him a prisoner, upon the slightest and most trivial pretences.

In the mean time England had been left under the government of two prelates, the bishop of Durham, and Longcamp, bishop of Ely. The clergy, sole possessors and rulers of the kingdom, might have given what laws they thought proper: but there is a fatality in the affairs of men, that, when they are destitute of foreign enemies, they generally make foes of each other. The governors, now without rivals in the temporal interest, disagreed among themselves, and thus weakened the power of the clergy. John, brother to Richard, who long had aspired to the crown, fomented this jealousy among the clergy, and putting himself at the head of the temporal lords, increased their authority by the addition of his own. He heard of the imprisonment of his brother with secret satisfaction, and used all his interest to continue his captivity.

The English, notwithstanding these ungenerous efforts, continued faithful to their king; his bravery and generosity had secured the hearts of the people and the cause he fought for engaged the affection of the clergy. The monasteries, therefore, strained their finances to raise a sum to procure his release, and the churches gave up their treasures upon promise of having them restored upon his return. By these efforts Richard at length procured his liberty: the emperor, either ashamed

of his own baseness, or fearing the resentment of the German princes, agreed upon his release for a large ransom, and England once more saw her brave monarch return, crowned with conquest, after numberless victories distresses, and surmounted dangers.

The generosity of this prince was equal to his valour: he knew that his brother John had in his absence, attempted to supplant him in the throne; he had an exact information of all his intrigues with the French, who had long endeavoured to blast his laurels and interrupt his conquest: yet upon John's submission, he generously forgave them all: *I wish*, cried he, taking his brother by the hand, *I wish I could as easily forget your offences, as you will my pardon.* This condescension was not lost upon a man whose heart, though naturally bad, was not dead to all the sentiments of humanity. From this time John served him with fidelity, and did him noble services in his battles with the French, which followed soon after.

While Richard was engaged upon the continent in a French war, an insurrection was suppressed at London, which though but slightly mentioned by historians, should be particularly marked by such as would trace the constitution. William Fitzosborn, commonly called Longbeard, is represented at once as a man brave and enterprising. He had long been an advocate for the poor and meanest of the people, and had gained the hearts of the populace, who held him in extreme veneration. Upon inflicting a new tax, the burden of which was to fall entirely on the poor, he raised an insurrection of the people, which the archbishop was, at first, unable to appease. The principal citizens being called, upon this occasion, to arms, Longbeard was

at length hard pressed, and obliged to take refuge in one of the churches; but no sanctuary could screen this self-delegated champion; he was seized, convicted, and, with nine of his accomplices, hanged in chains. This was the first instance of the people's struggling for privileges as a body distinct from the barons and clergy. Longbeard may be considered as the first victim to that untameable spirit, which ever since has actuated this people in support of its privileges, and prompted them to the rights of humanity.

Upon a review of the rest of his reign, we find the monarch almost always in the field, or intent upon schemes to supply his warlike expeditions. If, indeed, it were just to ascribe his misfortunes to his incensed father's malediction, we might be apt to suspect it, in some measure as the cause. However, after a reign of ten years thus passed in turbulence and fruitless victory, he died of a wound received from an arrow at the siege of Chaluz. While he was yet alive, the soldier by whose hand he died, was brought before him: the king sternly demanded the reason why he fought his life? *My father and my brothers,* replied the undaunted soldier, *died by your hand; heaven has given me the opportunity of a just and glorious revenge.* The dying monarch, no ways exasperated at this reply, observed, that the centinel had done his duty, ordered him a present and forgave him. But the Flemish general, who commanded under Richard, was unacquainted with such generosity: instead of complying with the king, he seized the miserable wretch, and, after Richard's death, commanded him, in his presence to be flead alive.

The principal actions of this prince, were gene-

rous and brave, I know not what pleasure Rapin, that so frequently injudicious historian, can take in lessening the virtues of the race of Norman monarchs. Among other faults ascribed to Richard, he accuses him of pride; yet it appears he bore the admonition of his inferiors with gentleness and good humour. The easiness of his disposition, as well as the delicacy of his wit, are apparent from the quickness of his replies. It is said that, being one day admonished, by an obscure monk, to part with his three daughters, by which he meant his pride, his lust, and his avarice; he wittily made answer, that he desired nothing more, and had already pitched upon proper husbands for their disposal: he resolved to give his pride to the Templars, his avarice to the monks, and as for his lust, the Clergy should share that among them. Such insolent advice, from a churchman, at this day would be attended with a very different reply.

LETTER XIV.

THE wars that were now kindled up between England and France, continued *A. D.* 1199. to depopulate both countries, without making, in the end, any material alteration. John, the brother and successor of Richard, pursued them with unabating vigour. We may regard these, and such like commotions, among Christian princes, as pestilences, which lay whole provinces waste, without making a change in their limits, their manners or government.

John, who was surnamed Lackland, was, in fact, possessed of the most extensive dominion of any prince in Europe. Besides the lands left him by succession, he had wrested Bretagne from Arthur, his nephew, whose right it was. However, John, by thus pretending to what was not justly his, in the end lost even what he had.

Having made himself master of Bretagne, the unfortunate Arthur also fell into his power. He caused him to be confined in a tower, and what became of him was never after explained to the public satisfaction. John was suspected, and not without reason, of the death of his nephew. He made some efforts to wipe off the odious stain, yet without effect. Happily for the instruction of future princes, this crime only opened a way to his future ruin; and having begun his reign by being the enemy of mankind in prosperity, the whole world, in the end, seemed to turn their back upon him in his distress. The power of the nobility of France was now exerted, with justice, against him: those assemblies of noblemen, each of which was, at that time, the petty lawless tyrant of his dependents, in this instance, at least, undertook to punish the guilty. Constance, the unfortunate mother of the murdered prince, flew for protection to the peers, and implored redress. The king of England was summoned to appear; he refused, and the peers of France confiscated all the lands and possessions which were held under that crown. This confiscation was soon attended with vigorous efforts to put it into execution. John, at once both weak and cowardly, a tyrant when unopposed, but timorous when in danger, suffered himself tamely to be stripped of them all. He successively lost Normandy, Touraine, and Poictou; and then

fled back to England, to make himself hated and despised.

Hitherto, however, he was only contemptible to his neighbour princes ; he still had some expectations from the esteem and affection of his natural subjects: but he soon shewed, that all his skill was only to make himself enemies, that he wanted abilities to reconcile. The clergy had, for some time, acted as a separate body, and had their elections of each other generally confirmed by the pope. The election of Archbishops had, for some time, been a continual subject of dispute between the suffragan bishops and the Augustine monks, and both had precedents to confirm their pretensions. Things being in this situation, the archbishop of Canterbury happened to die, and the Augustine monks, in a private manner, made choice of Reginald their sub-prior. The bishops exclaimed at this as invading their privileges, and here was likely to begin a theological contest. A politic prince would have managed the quarrel in such a manner, as to let the body of the clergy thus grow weaker by division: but John was not a politic prince: he immediately sided with the suffragan bishops, and the bishop of Norwich was unanimously chosen. To decide these differences, an appeal was made to the pope. Innocent III. who then filled the chair, possessed an unbounded share of power, and his talents were equal to the veneration he was held in: he vacated both claims, and enjoined the monks to chuse Stephen Langton, an Englishman, then at the court of Rome. John knew how to oppose, though not to negotiate; he received the pope's decree with a degree of ungoverned fury, and returned the pope a letter filled with abuse. Innocent, in return, put the whole

kingdom of England under an interdict, and forbade the king's subjects longer to obey him. These ecclesiastical thunders were, at that time, truly formidable: and the more so, as the execution of them was committed to Philip Augustus, king of France, an ambitious and a politic prince. To him the pope gave the kingdom of England, as a perpetual inheritance, assuring him of a remission of all his sins, if he happened to succeed in conquering it. He granted all who embarked in this cause also the same indulgences as were usually given to such as went upon a crusade. Philip immediately embraced the offer; not content with depriving John of his continental dominions, he devoured, in imagination, the kingdom of England also. By his preparations it was evident how desirous he was to succeed in this undertaking: the ships, of which his fleet was to consist, came together to the mouth of the Seine, whilst the princes, his vassals, collected their forces to the shore from all parts of the country. His army was numerous, and the discontents of the English were equivalent to thousands more. Philip was ready, therefore, to set sail, and John, on his part, made an expiring effort to receive him. All-hated as he was, the natural enmity between the French and the English, the name of a king, and some remaining share of power, put him at the head of an army of sixty thousand men, with which he advanced to Dover.

Europe regarded such important preparations with impatience, and the decisive blow was soon expected. The pope was too refined a politician for both, and took upon himself what he pretended to have designed for Philip. This singular negotiation was executed by Pandulph, as the pope's

legate to France and England. He passed through France, where he beheld Philip's great armament, and highly commended his zeal and diligence; from thence he went over to Dover, under pretence of negotiating with the barons in favour of the French king, and had a conference with John upon his arrival. He there represented the number of the enemy, the hatred of many of his own subjects; he intimated, that there was but one way to secure himself from impending danger, which was to put himself under the pope's protection, who, as a kind and merciful father, and was still willing to receive him to his bosom.

John was too much intimidated by the apparent danger not to embrace every means of offered safety. He consented to the legate's remonstrances, and took an oath to perform what the pope should impose. Having thus sworn to perform he knew not what, the artful Italian so well managed the barons, and intimidated the king, that he took the following extraordinary oath, before all the people, kneeling upon his knees, and putting his hands between those of the legate.

" I John, by the grace of God, King of England and Lord of Ireland, in order to expiate my
 " sins, from my own free will, and the advice of
 " my barons, give to the church of Rome, to Pope
 " Innocent, and his successors, the kingdom of
 " England, and all other prerogatives of my crown:
 " I will hereafter hold them as the pope's vassal.
 " I will be faithful to God, to the church of Rome,
 " and to the pope my master, and his successors legitimately elected. I promise to pay him a tribute of a thousand merks yearly, to wit, seven hundred for the kingdom of England, and three hundred for Ireland."

By this mean concession John secured his crown from a foreign invasion, but became effectually contemptible in the eyes of his people : still, however, he was not hated by his subjects ; their hatred only was wanting to sink him into complete wretchedness. After being exposed to so many disgraceful humiliations, he now thought, at the expence of his honour, to spend the remaining years of his life in tranquillity ; but, in proportion as he lost the esteem of the English, he lost their affections also. The former monarchs supported their power by a nice opposition of the clergy and the barons : when they intended to humble the nobility, they granted new privileges to the church ; when they desired to lessen the power of the clergy, they gave greater force to the temporal interests. John was ignorant of the manner of conducting this opposition : he had offended the clergy, and increased their power, without making them his friends ; he had it only left now to offend his barons, to render himself obnoxious to every order of people. His former pusillanimity soon gave this powerful body hopes of expecting a renewal of those powers of which they had been deprived in the preceding reign ; they demanded therefore, the re-establishment of their ancient privileges, and John believed himself authorised to refuse them. This created new dissensions : the king, with a strange perverseness, in turn demanded their assistance for the recovery of his lost dominions on the continent, and they refused to follow him. Their refusal was soon followed by more open acts of hostility : they formed a confederacy, and, at an appointed meeting, forced the king to grant all their demands, and sign that charter by which the English are said to hold their liberties at this day.

The barons and the clergy by this, seemed the only governors of the kingdom: the commonality had no share in the legislature; they were passed away, with the lands on which they were born, by their haughty possessors; they were reckoned only as the sheep, oxen, and other moveable possessions: which were upon the estate: the guardian of an heir was to preserve the lands entire, and to use the words of the Magna Charta, *sine destructione et vasto hominum vel rerum*, without destruction or waste of the men or the things upon it. The king, the barons, or the clergy, were all in reality, enemies to public liberty: their parties were so many factions in the nation, subversive of the rights of mankind. How they in turn, helped to establish liberty, you shall see in my future correspondence.

This charter was, in fact, giving the barons a definitive judgment upon whatsoever they thought proper to represent as a grievance: they were to prefer their complaints to the king, and he was, in forty days, to give them satisfaction, or they were legally empowered to command it. This was an infringement of the prerogative, which he complied with through fear, and, as soon as he was at liberty, he retracted all he had agreed to: he loudly complained of the force with which it was exacted, and he demanded justice from the pope his new master.

The pope, who had lately excommunicated the king, now excommunicated the barons: the barons, exasperated, did exactly what the pope had formerly done upon a like occasion; they offered the crown of England to France. Philip, ever ready to profit by these commotions, accepted their offer with

joy ; but, fearing the pope's displeasure, if he assumed a title to what was now considered as a patrimony of the holy see, he prevailed upon the barons to elect his son Lewis. To this league of the barons with France, the city of London lent their assistance. We should be careful to observe every beginning of power among the commons of England, and this seems to be one of the most obvious instances. This noble city was the first that freed itself from feudal government, and ventured to follow leaders of its own appointment; in short it may, at this period, be looked upon as a little republic, fighting between the powers of aristocracy, represented in the barons, and of despotism, assumed by the king.

In the mean time, the army of Lewis, which was called over to the assistance of the barons, committed strange disorders : while on the other hand, the army of John, which like the former, was mostly composed of foreigners, was still more insolent and audacious. Never was England in a more deplorable condition : she had two armies of hungry foreigners in her bowels, ravaging the country in a merciless manner and threatening ruin, whichever proved victorious. John was, at length, deposed by his barons, and Lewis solemnly crowned at London. The new monarch then first thought of having the pope's sanction to his claim. The pope debated in council the justice of a cause which scarcely deserved a moment's hesitation ; while John led his harraffed army from city to city, distrusting even his most faithful adherents. Pity then procured friends which prosperity could not procure ; and now the barons were struck with some remorse to see their native country, by their procurement, thus laid desolate, and

their king a wanderer : but what added to their afflictions, was, that their services were hitherto slightly repaid by the new-crowned monarch, and from a knowledge of his disposition, they could hope for no increase of future favours. It was even reported among them, that his intentions were to banish them for their disloyalty to their former sovereign, though exerted in his own favour. Whatever their motives might be, forty barons addressed letters of submissive suit to king John ; the pope also held the justness of his claim in suspense ; a gleam of distant prosperity seemed to brighten his affairs ; but, while the conjuncture seemed big with new events, the death of both the pope and of John decided the contest. This monarch died in the fifty-first year of his age, after a reign of more than seventeen years, spent in wars without success, and exertions of power without increase of authority.

LETTER XV.

HAD Lewis, who was crowned king, dissimulated till possessed of uncontrouled power, he might have retained the crown ; but the barons wanted a monarch subservient to their power, and Lewis refused a kingdom on such conditions.

They now, therefore, turned from the French intruder to the young monarch, from whom they expected greater condescension.

Henry III. appointed successor to the crown by John his father, was but ten years of age, when made king, and the earl of *A. D.* 1216

Pembroke was, by mutual consent, constituted his guardian. The inconstancy of the English was now more than ever apparent: Lewis was in some measure, forsaken by his new subjects, and after a defeat, obliged to relinquish all pretensions to the kingdom. What the barons, however had hoped from the king's tender age, did not answer their expectations. The earl of Pembroke who governed his nonage, made a powerful interest with the clergy, and, by their means, served to balance the state.

While Henry acted under the direction of others, the power of the barons seemed to have been kept under: he had the clergy for him, and consequently the people, and these two were equivalent to all the nobility. But, as soon as Henry came to take the reins into his own hands, numberless insurrections and calamities were the result of his obstinacy, folly, and vice. Infinite were the struggles for power between the barons and the king. Henry's luxury and profuseness continually rendered him a petitioner to the assembly of barons for money, (for now the kings began to ask money instead of men,) and they as constantly demanded a confirmation of those privileges which had been granted them under the reign of his predecessor.

In order to render himself independent of them, he found a thousand ridiculous pretences for raising money without their assistance. He would invite himself to the houses of his subjects, and always expected a present at the door; he extorted from the Jews, wherever he found them, without any remorse; he even scrupled not to defraud minors of their lawful inheritances, to which he

had been left protector: while the people had the mortification to see those sums lavished upon undeserving favourites, foreigners without merit, strumpets, flatterers, and all the vermin of a vicious court.

But all his exactions were not sufficient to supply his prodigality; he still wanted money, he still was obliged to have recourse to his barons, and yet he still desired to be absolute: the barons, on the contrary, who had long aimed at independence, and who detested his cowardice and luxury, refused his request. Though no monarch was more timid in danger, none was more presumptuous in prosperity: he threatened them, for refusing, with his severe displeasure, and strengthened himself by the assistance of the pope, in order to plunder the kingdom.

Whilst the English were complaining of the avarice of their king, and his profusion to foreign favourites, the pope's legate made his triumphal entry to rob them of what the king had not laid hands on. The interests of the clergy and of the pope were formerly one, but they now began to flow in divided channels. The riches which some years before settled in their monasteries at home, were drained off to enrich a distant kingdom, already too luxurious. The clergy, therefore, justly dreaded the arrival of an extraordinary legate, whose only aims were directed by avarice and extortion. They expostulated, but in vain, to the king, against this unnecessary ambassador from the head of the church: the king hoped to reap some private advantage from his arrival, and he was but a little concerned for public grievances. In every demand the king made for himself, the legate would take care to make one

for the pope also : he even proposed that the monks should sign their names to notes, where a blank was left for the sum specified. The exactions, thus daily committed upon the churches, compelled the bishops to carry their complaints to the pope himself ; but the king still vindicated the legate's conduct. At length, the prelates, quite tired with the repeated demands of the legate, who daily had some new pretext for getting money, resolved to meet and consider of some remedy to prevent his rapacity. They accordingly assembled, but had scarce begun to complain to each other of the miseries they suffered, when the legate entered the assembly, with a demand for more money ; this they considered as an accumulation of impudence and extortion, and they gave him a blunt denial. The legate, being disappointed, for this time left the assembly, and went to pillage the Scotch clergy with better prospects of success.

An accident happened about this time, which serves as a strong instance of the submission the people yielded to the power of Rome. Some business induced the legate to take Oxford in his way : he was received with all the grandeur and magnificence, which, from his character, he had a right to expect. As the luxury in which these Italian dignitaries lived, was great, several scholars of the university, while the legate's dinner was preparing, entered the kitchen, incited by motives of curiosity or hunger. While they here and there admired the opulence and luxury of all they saw, a poor Irish scholar ventured to beg relief from the cook : the cook, instead of giving an alms, threw a ladle full of boiling water in his face : an action which so provoked a Welch student who

was present, that, having a bow in his hand, he shot the cook dead with an arrow. The legate, hearing the tumult, retired in a fright to the tower of the church, where he remained till night-fall. As soon as he thought he might retire with safety, he hastened to the king, and complained of this outrage : the king, with his usual meanness, flew into a violent passion, and offered to give immediate satisfaction, by putting the offenders to death. The legate at first seemed to insist upon vengeance, but at length was appeased by proper submission from the university : all the scholars of that school which had offended him were ordered to be stripped of their gowns, and to walk barefoot, with halters about their necks, to the legate's house, and humbly crave pardon and absolution. It would be no easy matter to bring the students of Oxford to such an humiliation at present.

In this manner this brutal and capricious tyrant went on, leagued with the pope against his own dominions. He had now neither barons or clergy in his interest, and owed all his support to the authority of the papal and royal names. The pope continued to make reiterated demands upon the clergy, and the king would beg from his subjects at their own houses, as if he had been asking charity. At one time he would get money by pretending to take the crusade ; at another he would prevail, by going to re-conquer his dominions in France : again he would extort aid, under pretext of portioning a relation ; and he would frequently assure his parliament of barons, that, though he had hitherto behaved unworthily, yet, upon being supplied once more with proper assistance, he would reform and give universal satisfaction. Thus he

drew forth various fums, which, without shame, he bestowed upon flatterers, panders to his pleasures, or an army of foreigners, which he kept to intimidate his native dominions.

At length, however, the parliament, fatigued with his unperforming promises, resolved to refuse his demands for the future: they therefore entered into an association, and the city of London was invited to accede. At the head of this powerful combination was the earl of Leicester, the king's brother-in-law, who had risen into power merely by his master's profuseness. The king, by a strange absurdity of thinking, as he became more feeble and unpopular, increased his demands for fresh supplies. He was worsted in France, and obliged to purchase a shameful truce; he was conquered by the Welsh, and became contemptible to Scotland: yet still he continued to harass his own subjects with his usual extortion, as if he designed to create in them that awe with which he failed to impress his enemies. The barons finding him incorrigible, after an experience of near forty years, at length shook off their allegiance, and sent the king notice that they renounced the fealty they owed him, and now considered him only as the common enemy of mankind.

Both sides were now up in arms, and the country again became the theatre of civil slaughter. The first advantages in this contest were in favour of the king. He was a coward in danger, and shewed himself a tyrant in victory. Flushed with the success with which his arms had been just crowned, he resolved to march directly to London. He made no doubt but the city, intimidated by his late advantages, would declare in

his favour ; and, had he formerly behaved with paternal indulgence, perhaps his present hopes would not have been groundless ; but a remembrance of his former ill usage repressed their loyalty. Instead of opening their gates to receive a conqueror, they sent forth an army to oppose his entry. Henry stopped his forces in a panic, and returned to meet the Earl of Leicester, who advanced with his army near Lewes, in the county of Sussex.

All hopes of reconciliation being now laid aside, nothing was thought of but the decision of the sword. The earl advancing with his army, drew up in order of battle near the king, who prepared, though with reluctance, to receive him. The battle was begun by prince Edward, the king's son, who attacked the Londoners with great fury, and drove them off the field of battle : on the other hand, the king's body of forces were defeated, after a short resistance by the earl of Leicester. His majesty, who commanded them in person, gave no instances of valour, but tamely suffered himself to be taken prisoner : which soon paved the way for the defeat of the whole army, and prince Edward's surrendering at discretion.

The king and the prince being thus prisoners, the barons took all advantages that the most refined policy could suggest. They knew how to operate upon the king's pusillanimity, and obliged him to send letters to all the governors of the kingdom, to renounce their obedience, and surrender his castles to the conquerors. They who draw their sword against their king, says the proverb, should fling the scabbard away. The barons with this in view, were resolved entirely to new-

model the constitution, for they now knew that a composition with the royal captive was impossible; and at this period we must fix the date of English liberty. The privileges of the king, the barons, and the clergy, were but different modes of various usurpations; the commonality had little or no share in the legislature, and only looked tamely on, or were led to slaughter, without sharing the rewards of victory.

The barons and clergy, however, now saw that the government could not readily be transferred, without some greater power than they were at present possessed of. The dethroning of a king, the resisting of a pope, were actions that they could not defend upon the principles of the times: they called in, therefore, an aid till now entirely unknown in the world; they called in the sanction of the people. The authority of the barons, clergy, and the people of England, was set to oppose the royal and papal authority. And here I cannot but admire the strange concurrence of circumstances which brought this first dawn of liberty into being. To effect this, it was first necessary that England should be possessed of a contested foreign dominion: that the king should have frequent necessities for money to preserve it; that this necessarily should produce a dependence upon the barons and clergy, and that this dependence should give them in return, a share of power; it was necessary, that the interests of the clergy should be separated from those of the crown, and should concur in the opposition: in short, it was necessary that the powers on both sides should be so exactly balanced, that so small a weight as that of the people, as it was then considered, should be thrown in to turn the scale.

A parliament was called, in which the king was obliged to give orders, that four knights from each county should sit, in order to represent their respective shires, and deliberate for the general benefit of the people. This is the first rude outline of an English house of commons. The people had been gaining some consideration since the diminution of the feudal laws, and the establishment of corporation charters, by which men were in some measure, rescued from the power of their masters, and permitted to improve a spirit of freedom in towns. As arts increased, the number of these little republics (if I may so call them) increased; and we find them, at the present period, of consequence enough to be adopted into a partnership of the legislation. But these privileges were granted by the barons merely to confirm their own; and could they have now agreed among themselves, they might have continued in possession of all the authority of the kingdom, and the constitution might thus settle into a confirmed aristocracy: but they grew jealous of each other's power; they began to fear the earl of Leicester, who had abrogated kingly authority, and was intent only upon despotism. This produced new struggles, and these ended once more in the restoration of the king and his family: the earl of Leicester was defeated and slain upon the field of battle. Henry, who had been led about as a captive, and always exposed in the front of that army which had dethroned him, was once more set at liberty by his victorious son Edward; and though, to the end of life, he persevered in his former follies, yet the people retained that share of liberty which they had acquired in the turbulent parts of his reign. A spirit of liberty had now

diffused itself from the incorporated towns through the whole mass of people, and ever after blazed forth at convenient seasons : afterwards, whoever lost, they were sure to be gainers ; and if in the contest they laid down their lives, and suffered all the hardships of war, yet they considered those calamities as trivial, if liberty were left improved and better secured to their posterity.

LETTER XVI.

AT the death of Henry III, Edward his son and successor, was employed in the holy wars, in which, though he gained nothing *A. D. 1272.* to the cause for which he fought, he acquired the character of an excellent general and intrepid foldier. As he came to an undisputed throne, the opposite interests were proportionably feeble : the barons were exhausted by mutual dissensions, the clergy hated the pope, and the people as is evident from some insurrections at that time, were not much satisfied with the clergy. It was natural to suppose, that a politic and a conquering prince would take this opportunity of giving the royal prerogative its former splendor and authority. However, he was satisfied with moderate power, and only laboured to be terrible to his enemies.

The Welsh had long enjoyed their own laws and customs. They were the only remains of the ancient Britons, and had still preserved their freedom and their country uncontaminated by foreign

invasions. Incapable, however, of resisting their enemies in the plain, their chief defence was in their inaccessible mountains, those natural bulwarks of their country. Whenever England was disturbed by factions at home, or its troops called off to wars abroad, the Welsh would continually pour in their irregular troops, and lay the open country waste. No situation can be worse, than that of several petty principalities bordering upon each other under different commanders, and pursuing different interests. Sensible of this, Edward led a powerful army against Lewellyn, their king: he had frequently before been chastised, and obliged to beg peace, but was ever ready to seize an opportunity of making an advantageous war. Upon the approach of Edward, he took refuge among the inaccessible mountains of Snowden, and there maintained his post without danger. The king of England, not discouraged by the difficulty of the situation, was resolved to invest his army, by securing all the avenues by which he might escape. Posted as Lewellyn was, he might certainly have harrassed his enemies without himself being destroyed, had not a trifling victory over a body of his besiegers induced him to come down and face the enemy upon more equal terms. A small advantage gained was interpreted as the beginning of the completion of Merlin's prophecy, in which he was to possess the whole kingdom without a rival. Flattered with such expectations, he descends into the plain, without considering the inequality of his forces. The Welsh and the English now, for the last time drew up against each other. Lewellyn, after having performed all that courage and desperation could inspire, found himself, at last, fatally de-

ceived : he was killed upon the field of battle, and his forces utterly routed. With him expired the distinction of his nation : it was soon after united to the kingdom of England, made a principality, and given to the eldest son of the crown. Foreign conquests might add to the glory, but the present added to the felicity of the kingdom. The Welsh were now blended with their conquerors, and in the revolution of a few ages, all national animosity was entirely forgotten.

His native dominions being thus freed from every invader, the king soon had an opportunity to increase his power, by the dissension of his neighbours. The crown of Scotland, after the death of Alexander the Third, became destitute of an apparent heir. John Bruce and Robert Baliol divided all the suffrages of the kingdom. A civil war impended ; and nothing but an umpire, appointed by mutual consent, could determine the contest without blood. For this purpose, by a fatal mistake in the politics of the Scots, Edward was chosen, accepted the mediation with pleasure, came to Norham, and, from being chosen umpire, claimed a superiority over the country whose crown had been submitted to his decision, and asserted his right to the government. To wear the appearance of justice, however, after long deliberations, in which great care was taken to inculcate his right to the crown of Scotland, he fixed Baliol on the throne, less as king than as a vassal of England.

The first step taken by Edward, after placing Baliol on the throne, was sufficient to convince the Scots of his intentions to stretch his superior prerogative to the utmost. A merchant of Gascoigne presented a petition to him, implying that Alexander

late king of Scotland, was indebted to him a certain sum, still unpaid, notwithstanding all his solicitations to the new king for payment. Edward eagerly embraced this opportunity of exercising his new right, and summoned the king of Scotland to appear at Westminster, to answer in person, to the complaint which was brought against him by the merchant. Upon subjects equally trivial he sent six different summonses, at different times in one year; so that the Scots king soon perceived himself only possessed of the name without the authority. Willing, therefore, to shake off so troublesome a master, Baliol, revolted, and procured the pope's absolution for the infraction of his former oaths of homage. Edward now offered the crown to Bruce, who accepted it with joy; and thus a strong party of the Scots was added in strengthening the English king to subdue their native country. Edward, at the head of a numerous army, marched into the country: numberless were the victories gained on one side and the other, in which the conquerors acquired much honour, but either country lost the bravest of its subjects. But wars like these, though minutely related by every historian, are scarce worth treasuring in any memory, but that of an herald or antiquarian. The whole may be comprised in the following short description: one barbarous nation meets another in some plain, generally by mutual appointment; little art, evolution, evasion, or subterfuge, was practised or known; they rushed upon each other, and numbers and tumult generally decided the victory. The revolutions of the government, and not the description of battles fought in these reigns, serve to adorn the page of history. At one season Scotland was brought to the lowest

degree of humiliation, and Edward had laid a plan, which probably he ever had in view, of uniting it, as a conquest to the crown of England. But his scheme proved abortive; the time of that kingdom's deliverance was at hand: they found safety in despair, and upon the king's return to England, they once more sallied down from their mountains upon the English army which he had left, and gained a complete victory.

This was terrible news to Edward, who had already built upon that kingdom as his own. He was now implacably exasperated against the Scots, and resolved to take a signal vengeance; to this purpose, he summoned all the vassals of the crown, without distinction, to be ready at a time and place particularly appointed. His intention was, to march into the heart of the kingdom, and destroy it, to use his own expression, from sea to sea. He soon saw himself at the head of the finest army England had ever produced: the scots trembled at his approach, but death stopped the course of his intended devastations.

As soon as he perceived that his disorder was to be fatal, he sent for the prince his son, whom he had appointed to succeed him, and taking him by the hand, earnestly recommended, with his dying breath three things: he first enjoined him not to recall Gavestone a flatterer, who he knew would poison his principles; he next desired that his heart might be sent to the holy sepulchre; and, thirdly, he recommended him to prosecute the war with the Scots, till he had entirely subdued them, desiring his bones might be carried about at the head of the army, the more effectually to strike terror into the enemy he had so often subdued.

England began to grow truly formidable under this reign; the opposition of the barons was but feeble and ill-supported: the monarch was, in some measure, absolute, though he was prudent enough never to exert his power. He is accused of severity, and it is probable he might have exerted justice with too heavy an hand; yet it should be particularly remarked, that he was the first who began to dispense indiscriminate justice. Before him, the people who rose in insurrections were punished in the most severe manner, by the sword or the gibbet; while the nobility, who were almost always refractory, were treated with a degree of lenity which encouraged future disobedience: a small fine, which, in fact, only fell upon their poor dependents, generally wiped off their offences. Edward punished both with equal severity.

However, let us here remark the alterations in the spirit of the times. The English, now incorporated with their fierce Norman conquerors, were no longer the tame consenting people they formerly appeared, and always were prepared to reason with that authority which they could not resist. With this spirit of opposition a spirit of cruelty also seemed to enter; regardless of their own lives, the people did not seem very solicitous about the lives of others. The penal laws now began to assume more rigour: in the times of William the Conqueror, it was a law, that no man should be punished with death; but that law was at present quite laid aside, and several crimes were rendered capital.

But what gave the reign of Edward a true value with posterity, was the degree of power the people began to assume during this period. The clergy and the barons he considered, in some measure, as

rivals; and, to weaken their force, he gave authority to the commons; a law was enacted, by which no tax could be levied without their consent. His intentions were to render himself absolute by their assistance; and, it is but too probable, he might have become so, had he lived to put his designs in execution; but he died at a time he was beginning to throw off parliamentary restrictions, and left the people a share of authority, which had been given them for very different purposes from the promotion of liberty. The most healing medicines are often extracted from poisons. In short, whatever Edward's character was as a man, as a king, he was of infinite service to his country.

LETTER XVII.

IT was long an opinion of the English, and grounded on observations made from the days of king Arthur, that between two valiant and able princes in this nation, there always intervened a king of less sense and courage, *moin, suffisans de sens et de prouesse*. That there was something in the remark, you have hitherto seen in several successions.

No monarch could come to a crown with more advantageous omens than Edward II. an army prepared for victory, a people united, and an undisputed succession. But he soon gave reasons to fear his future conduct, by the commencement of his reign. Regardless of his father's dying admonitions, he discontinued the war with Scotland, and recalled Gavestone, his favourite from exile.

Gavestone was a foreigner by birth, adorned with every accomplishment of person and mind that could create affection, but destitute of those qualities of heart and understanding that serve to procure esteem. He was beautiful, witty, brave, but, at the same time, vicious, effeminate, and debauched: he had assisted in all Edward's youthful extravagancies and pleasures; had been, to use a Latin expression, his *arbiter elegantiarum*; and thus had secured this young voluptuous monarch's affections.

A prudent king may have private friends, but should never retain a public favourite; royal favour should shine with indiscriminate lustre, and the monarch should ever guard against raising those he most loves to the highest preferments. In being thus biased by his affections, he will probably be induced to reward talents unequal to the burthen of affairs, or impatient of the fatigues of application. Such was the case of Edward, with regard to his new favourite: he loaded him with favours, at a time when he was giving up his title to the sovereignty of Scotland, which had been so hardly earned by his predecessor.

The barons, at this time, were not so entirely humbled, but that they resented a conduct so injurious to the interests of the kingdom as well as their own. Gavestone's pride, his being a foreigner, his insolence, soon raised a strong party against him: an army was formed to oppose his administration; Gavestone was taken, and beheaded without even the formality of a trial. Thus you perceive a spirit of cruelty beginning to enter the nation. The death of Gavestone was, probably, supported by precedents found in the former reign.

The successors of Edward the First copied after him in his faults alone. The vices of conquering monarchs and great kings are ever most dangerous, because they most generally produce imitation.

From this time the scaffolds were drenched with English blood : each party, as it happened to prove victorious, brought their prisoners, as traitors, to the block or the gibbet : never was so much blood spilt in a juridical manner in England, as in this hideous reign. The Scots, during these storms, endeavoured to fortify their government : they conquered the English in more than one battle. Robert Bruce, being made king, became powerful from the divisions of the English, who pretended to be his masters.

Edward in the mean time, seemed only intent on prosecuting his pleasures, or becoming formidable to his own subjects. The mutual hatred between him and the barons seemed daily to increase ; or, in other words, as he still became more despicable in the eyes of the people, the barons, lately depressed, grew into power. His supineness gave them an opportunity of executing all their designs, so that at last he suffered himself to be taken prisoner ; but he was soon after released, upon a promise of future amendment. A certain number of the barons were admitted into his council, and he gave his word to perform nothing without their consent and approbation : but he was only born for misfortunes. This monarch, of an easy nature, and who probably, if born in a private station, would have been considered as a worthy man, could not live without a favourite. Into the place which Gavestone held in his affections, Hugh Spencer, a youth of great address and many

accomplishments, succeeded. This young gentleman, no ways intimidated by the misfortunes of Gavestone, in similar circumstances, pursued his conduct in every particular: he even went beyond him in pride, avarice, and prodigality. An universal discontent soon became visible: all the vices of the king were imputed to young Spencer alone, and his own were enough to sink him into ruin. The barons, therefore once more combined to destroy this favourite, who was, in reality, without a protector; they therefore banished him and his father out of the kingdom, with great threats, if ever he attempted to return. This indignity to the king seemed to rouse him from his former lethargy: the queen also, a bold, haughty woman endeavoured to stimulate him to revenge. She had received an affront on a pilgrimage to Canterbury, in being denied admittance, by the governor, into the castle of Leeds, on the way. She therefore persuaded her weak consort, that the present conjuncture was very favourable for freeing himself from the power of the barons, and that punishing the governor of Leeds would intimidate them so far as to prevent any future opposition. Her advice was embraced with avidity: the king raised an army without opposition; he besieged the castle of Leeds; the governor was taken, and the queen now had an opportunity of satiating her revenge by having him beheaded.

Success only seemed to push this weak prince on to new violence; he besieged the castles of several other barons, and became master of them with equal ease. To complete his contempt for all former compacts, he recalled his young favourite, Spencer, once more from banishment. We may

easily, upon this occasion, perceive how much the barons were declined from that degree of power they possessed two or three reigns before. The monarch, at present, that oppressed them, was voluptuous, ignorant, and a coward, in the general opinion of the people; yet, feeble as he was, the barons were scarce able to resist him: the power of the people was now grown truly formidable, and Edward had address enough to procure a part of them to second his pretensions. The king now, therefore, in the meridian of power, prosecuted the most rigorous measures: the queen, cruel by nature, and Spencer his favourite, actuated by revenge stimulated him to numberless acts of severity. Among others who perished in the opposition, was Thomas, Earl of Lancaster. This nobleman had always been signalized for his valour among the confederate lords, and was a peculiar opposer of the growing power of the family of the Spencers. He was taken fighting, at the head of a body of forces, which he had in vain, endeavoured to rally. He had no great hopes to expect any favour from judges who were his enemies from personal motives: he was condemned to be quartered as a traitor; but, from a regard to his station, the king changed his punishment to beheading. In this manner nine other lords were executed at York as a terror to the kingdom; but these terrors could not secure a monarch who was in himself contemptible. Whatever might have been the Earl of Lancaster's real character, his death left it uncertain, whether he acted with views to get himself created king, or was only the champion of public liberty. However that be, the people in general had his memory in great veneration, and considered him as a martyr.

We may by this see what side in this quarrel was espoused by the clergy : immediately after the earl's death, miracles were said to be wrought at his tomb, and every pretended miracle of this kind was productive of a thousand enemies to the king.

The favourite Spencer and his father still gave an unbounded scope to their revenge : not content with putting to death the heads of the opposite party, with depriving others of their estates, and with condemning great numbers to perpetual banishment, they were resolved to level their rage against Robert Mortimer, now actually in their custody and confined within the Tower. There were few circumstances that could apparently screen him from their resentment : he had been openly in arms, and active in the opposition : he had no character to render his punishment unpopular, and none that he knew to intercede for him with the king ; yet he found his punishment remitted, to his astonishment, notwithstanding all the solicitations of his enemies to the contrary. The queen was fallen in love with this youth, and used all her interest to procure his pardon : an intimacy had actually commenced between them ; and this protection, with which he was publickly honoured by her, drew down the resentment of the two favourites. In this opposition of interests, Edward seemed entirely passive ; he wished to please both parties, and one day gave orders to screen young Mortimer from pursuit, and the next to secure him wherever he could be detected : the feeble king knew not how to refuse any request, when he loved those who made the demand.

A dissension thus between two parties, who shared the affections of the king, must soon terminate in the dismissal of either. To get the

queen removed, the Spencers contrived to persuade her to go upon a certain negociation to the court of her brother, the king of France. With this proposal, though from her enemies, the queen readily complied; she foresaw it would give her an uncontrouled liberty of enjoying the company of her gallant, and might give her power of being revenged on his oppressors. Philip the Fair, who was at that time upon the throne of France, pursued the politics of every wise king: he encouraged the queen, his sister, to oppose Edward her husband; and thus, by dividing his enemies, he hoped to weaken them. Thus heartened, she loudly inveighed against the favourites of the king, levied troops in France to oppose their power, and with this army landed in England, where her expectations were answered, in being joined by a powerful body of malecontents. Mortimer, her lover, was with her at the head of these troops, at the same time that the favourite Spencer was the heart of the opposite party.

Edward was little able to withstand his enemies: all his endeavours to raise troops proved ineffectual: none would venture to expose themselves in the king's defence, for they saw that an ignominious death must be the consequence of a defeat: and ingratitude of victory. The queen took Spencer, the father at Bristol. This gentleman, fourscore and ten years old, had passed a youth of tranquillity and reputation; he had been esteemed and loved by all the kingdom, but his fond compliance with his son's ambition, involved his old age in the turbulence of faction: he was immediately hanged up in his armour, without even the formality of a trial. His unhappy son did not long survive him: he was taken, with a few more, attend-

ing the king, their master, into an obscure convent in Wales. - Revenge, and not justice prompted all the punishments of his reign. The queen had not patience to stay till the meeting of a parliament to destroy her enemy; she ordered him to be produced before the insulting populace, enjoyed herself the pleasure of seeing him led to the place of execution, where he was hanged on a gibbet fifty feet high. Several other lords shared his fate, all deserving pity indeed, had they not formerly justified this inhumanity by setting a cruel example.

The unhappy king now abandoned, saw himself in the power of his enemies, without a single friend to stand between him and universal reproach he was conducted to the capital, amidst the insults and reproaches of his subjects: confined in the Tower, judged by the parliament, and solemnly deposed. He was assigned a pension for his support, his son a youth of fourteen, was crowned king, and the queen appointed regent during his minority.

The deposed monarch but a short time survived his misfortunes: he was sent from prison to prison, a wretched outcast, and the sport of his mercenary keepers: in these journeys they made him suffer all the indignities that cruel and ingenious villany could devise: among others, it is said, they shaved him for sport in the open fields, using water from the neighbouring ditch. The genius of the people must surely have suffered a gradual deterioration, or they would never have permitted the venerable head of majesty, a monarch, whose greatest fault was the violence of his friendships, to be used with so much indignity. What firmness soever the

deposed prince had hitherto shewn in his misfortunes, it left him upon this occasion ; he looked upon his merciless insulters with an air of fallen majesty, and shed a torrent of tears : the cruelty of his death alone was wanting to terminate a life of complete misery. The last place of his imprisonment was Berkeley-castle : here he was kept totally destitute of all the comforts, and almost all the necessaries of life. But these miseries were not long to continue : the two keepers, entered his apartment one night as he lay in bed ; to stifle his cries, covered his face with a pillow, and then with a cruelty not to be paralleled, thrust a red-hot pipe up his body, through which they ran a red-hot iron, and burnt his bowels : his horrid shrieks, however were heard at a distance from the castle, and, though all possible care was taken to conceal it, his murder was soon after discovered by one of the accomplices. Misfortunes like his must ever create pity, and a punishment, so disproportionate to his guilt, in some measure softens the severity of reproach.

LETTER XVIII.

WE now begin to have some faint idea of the origin of our present happy constitution ; and, as I am going to lead to a reign which gave new strength to the people, permit me to entertain you a moment with the spirit of thinking in the nation, at the juncture I am *A. D. 1327.* speaking of. By the continual admission of foreigners, in several of the preceding reigns, the number of the commons was surpris-

singly increased ; and the introduction of some new manufactures, the making of woollen cloths and glass, for instance, still decreased the retinue of the nobles, and threw greater numbers of the inhabitants into chartered towns. The barons, however, still continued to reside at their castles in the country, gave laws to the peasants around them, and exercised a despotic authority over all their dependents. The clergy had, for some time, been at variance with the pope, and this dissention contributed to strip the mask of sanctity from both: the division of the church was a most certain means of rendering it contemptible, since all its strength lay only in the influence it had over the minds of its votaries. But there was another principle, which had been, for some time operating, and which, in time, promised to be a certain means of diminishing the power of the barons and the clergy ; I mean a diminution of *personal service* in war. In former times, every vassal was to appear, at the command of his lord, with horse, attendants, and all the apparatus necessary for a campaign. If the nobility or vassals of the crown refused to march, the king was unable to compel them. In this manner, a combination of the nobility had it ever in their power to give laws to the crown, because they were not only the deliberating power, but the acting power also : but, from the increase of the people, from the more extensive use of money instead of barter, and from the number of independent foreigners, ready to accept pay ; from these causes, I say, the kings began to levy armies without the assistance of the nobility. Monarchs now only wanted money to be at the head of armies as numerous and powerful as they thought proper : wherever money was, there

lay power : and the people, by traffic and industry, beginning to grow rich, they were necessarily admitted into some share in the legislature. Thus we see the nobility, the clergy, and the people, different from what they were two or three reigns before this, and the strength of the king did not suffer a less mutation. Former monarchs might be considered only as the first and most powerful barons of the land : a baron was in miniature, what the king was in the great. The monarch had scarcely any real power but what he derived from his own crown-lands and vassals : when he was resolved to exert his strength, he could only command his own tenants, and those who held immediately under him : the barons were summoned indeed ; but, if they were displeased they might refuse their assistance, and all their dependents were obliged to imitate their example : these acknowledged subjection, not to the king, but their own master : and nothing but a civil war with the refractory nobleman could bring him to justice. But the face of the old constitution was now beginning to be changed ; every order in the state began to have a mutual dependence on each other ; the power of the king to extend to the highest and the lowest of his subjects ; and opposite interests to concur for the benefit of all.

This change of government seemed to influence the manners of the nation : a spirit of gallantry prevailed, which probably, took its first rise in those eastern countries, which had long been famous for every luxurious refinement. Historians represent the kingdom as immersed in debauchery and licentiousness ; that ladies laying aside their modesty, seemed to glory in the loss of their virtue. Nothing, say they, was more common, than to see

them riding in troops to the tournament, dressed like cavaliers, with swords by their sides, their horses adorned with rich trappings, and behaving with more than masculine effrontery. Whatever monks may observe upon this subject, this awkwardly gallant behaviour, in some measure, express'd a degree of growing elegance in the times, and shewed that the people were emerging from primitive barbarity.

Under Edward III. the constitution of our parliaments, and the whole frame of our government, became reduced into a better form. A spirit of liberty breathes in all his laws : yet no king knew how to make himself more absolute. As the father lost his crown and his life, in the most miserable manner, by suffering himself to be governed by his ministers, and protecting them from the resentment of his people ; so the son very early exerted his own authority, and freed himself from the guardianship, or rather subjection, of his mother the queen, and her paramour, who had long oppressed the nation, and dishonoured him, by their scandalous conduct. Mortimer was dragged from the queen's apartment, in the most ignominious manner, while she implored all the while that they would spare the gentle Mortimer. But the young king was deaf to her intreaties ; the pity which she once refused her unhappy husband was now denied her : the parliament condemned Mortimer to die, without being permitted to plead, as he had served Spencer sometime before. He fell by the hands of the hangman ; and Isabella was confined to the castle of Rising, with a pension of three thousand pounds a year. Her confinement was severe, though she survived her disgrace twenty five years, and, abandoned to universal

contempt, wept in solitude rather her misfortunes than her vices.

Edward III. well knew, that a conquering monarch was fittest to please a warlike people. The Scots had long triumphed with impunity; he therefore began his reign with reducing them to the most distressful circumstances, and once more brought them to acknowledge his sovereignty over the crown. But he was soon drawn off to objects of greater victories: a new scene began to be opened in France, and Europe, in suspense, began to doubt whether Edward's claims to that kingdom were secured to him by right of inheritance, or by the rights of conquest. France, at that time, was by no means so extensive as at present: it comprehended neither Dauphine, nor Provence, nor Franche Compté. It was rendered still more feeble from the nature of its government: several powerful neighbours, who pretended to be vassals to that crown, rather served to weaken than strengthen the monarchy.

The people of that kingdom were unhappy, from their mutual divisions: and the king, at that time, was still more so. The three sons of Philip the Fair, in full parliament, accused their wives of adultery; they were each condemned, and ordered to be imprisoned for life. Lewis Huttin, the eldest son, caused his wife to be strangled; her lovers died by a new kind of punishment, they were dead alive.

After the death of Lewis Huttin, king of France, a question arose about the validity of the Salic law; a law made in the early period of the French monarchy, importing that no woman should rule. As this is a subject of some importance in the English history, it is necessary to expatiate here a little.

They had hitherto never enquired, in France, whether a female could succeed in the kingdom. Laws are only made to regulate what may happen by what has happened already, and, as an instance of this kind had never occurred, there were no laws to direct them. Precedents, in lesser instances, were the only guides in such a circumstance; but these precedents had varied with the occasion. The parliament of France had often adjudged the succession to women: as Artois was formerly given to a female, in prejudice of the male heir: the succession of Champagne had been, on some occasions, given to the daughters, and, on others, they were held unqualified to succeed. We thus see that right changed with power; and justice in such a case, was either unknown or disregarded.

Lewis Huttin left an only daughter, and two brothers: the elder, Philip the Tall, assumed the crown, in prejudice of Huttin's daughter, and attempted to cover his usurpation by the Salic law. The younger brother, Charles the Fair, jealous of his elder brother's fortune, opposed his pretensions, and asserted the daughter's right to succeed. This cause was carried before the French parliament, and decided in favour of Philip. This monarch enjoyed the crown but a short time, and, dying, left only daughters to succeed him. Charles the Fair, however, was now of a different sentiment from what he had been formerly; he now maintained the law for the exclusion of females, because it made in his favour. He seized the crown without opposition, and enjoyed it for some time, but, dying, left his wife with child. As there was now no apparent heir, the next heir to the crown was to be regent, and two persons asserted their claim upon this oc-

caſion : Edward III. had laid his claim, as being, by his mother Ifabella, who was daughter of Philip the Fair, and ſiſter to the three laſt kings of France, rightful heir to the crown. Philip Valois, on the other hand had ſeized upon it, as being the next heir by the male ſucceſſion. The claims of Philip were preferred ; he was conſtituted regent of France, and the queen being unfortunately brought-to-bed of a daughter he was unanimouſly elected king. He was crowned by his ſubjects with univerſal ſatisfaction, had the appellation of Philip the Fortunate given him : and to this he added thoſe which might merit good-fortune, virtue, and juſtice. Among other inſtances of his felicity, he might reckon that of the homage paid him by Edward, his rival, which he came to offer at Amiens ; however, this homage was ſoon followed by a war, and Edward diſputed that crown, of which he had juſt before declared himſelf the vaſſal.

A brewer at Ghent was one of thoſe who gave the greateſt aſſiſtance to Edward in this war, and determined him to aſſume the title of King of France. This citizen's name was James Ardevet, grown too powerful for a ſubject, and one of thoſe, according to Machiavel, whom kings ought to flatter or deſtroy. Thus aſſiſted Edward made a powerful invaſion. Upon landing, he was challenged by Philip to try their fortune upon equal terms, in ſome appointed plain. Edward accepted the challenge, for in every action this prince affected the hero ; but, ſome obſtacles intervening, the war was proſecuted in the uſual manner, by taking every advantage where it happened to offer.

In theſe battles there is little material for inſtruction, nor can they afford any thing more entertaining than the hiſtory of a marauding party

in one of our modern gazettes. It is sufficient to observe that several skirmishes only drew on the great and decisive victory of Cressy, which every honest Englishman boasts of to this very hour. In this memorable battle, Philip was at the head of an hundred thousand men, and Edward only of thirty thousand. The Black Prince, his son, as yet but a youth of fifteen, commanded the first line of the English army; the second was conducted by the Earls of Northampton and Arundel; and the body of reserve was headed by the king in person. He and the prince of Wales had that morning received the sacrament with great devotion, and his behaviour denoted the calm intrepidity of a man resolved on conquest or death. The army being thus arranged, the king rode from rank to rank, with a cheerful countenance; bade his soldiers remember the honour of their country, while his eloquence animated the whole army to a degree of enthusiastic expectation. To oppose the English, Philip had drawn up his formidable army in three divisions also; the first commanded by John of Luxemborough, the blind king of Bohemia; the second was led by the count of Alencon; and Philip, in person, commanded the body of reserve. This was the first battle that the Black Prince had seen; but he now appeared foremost in the very shock, and continued, for some time to turn the fortune of the day; but his courage would have been soon oppressed by numbers, had not the earl of Northampton come to his relief. The very thickest of the battle was now gathered round him, and the valour of a boy, filled even veterans with astonishment: but their surprise at his courage could not but give way to their fears for his person;

apprehensive that some misfortune might happen to him in the end, they sent the king word to hasten to the prince's relief. Edward, who had all this time viewed the engagement from a windmill, with great deliberation asked if his son was dead; and being answered, that he still lived and was giving astonishing instances of his valour, *Then tell my generals, says the king, that he shall have no assistance from me: the honour of this day shall be his, and he shall be indebted to his own merit alone for victory.* Upon this occasion thirty thousand of the French were killed on the field of battle, and the day after, they experienced another defeat. This victory is partly ascribed to four pieces of artillery, which the English first made use of here, and the use of which had been but lately discovered. Edward, after two victories gained in two days, took Calais, of which the English remained in possession two hundred and ten years.

This war, which was at once carried on in three different counties of France, thinned the inhabitants of the invaded country, and drained that of the invaders. But a destruction still more terrible than that of war, contributed, at this time, to desolate the wretched inhabitants of Europe. A pestilence more terrible than any mentioned in former history, which had already almost dispeopled Asia and Africa, came to settle on the western world, with increased malignity. The fourth part of the people were cut off by it: in London it raged with such violence, that in one year's space there were buried, in Charter-house church-yard, above fifty thousand persons. It was in the midst of this terrible scourge of nature, that the ambition of Edward and Philip were contending for new conquests, and adding

to the calamities of mankind. These ravages, however, were silently repaired by commerce and industry; those arts, which were then despised by princes, were laying the seeds of future opulence and increased population. These arts were travelling, gradually, from Italy, and had begun to find harbour in England; the refinements and the pleasures of sense every day began to improve, but intellectual refinement was yet unknown; sensual enjoyments must ever be carried to some height, before mankind can find leisure or taste for entertainments of a more delicate nature.

During the English victories on the continent, the Scots, ever willing to embrace a favourable opportunity of rapine or revenge, invaded England with a numerous army. This unexpected invasion at such a juncture, alarmed the English, but, however, was not capable of disheartening them. Lionel, Edward's son, who was left guardian of England during his father's absence, was yet but a boy, incapable of commanding an army; but the victories on the continent even seemed to inspire women with ardour. Philippa, Edward's queen, took upon her to repulse the enemy, in person: to that end, heading the troops drawn together from all parts, with wonderful expedition, she marched directly against the Scots, and offered them battle. The Scotch king was no less impatient to engage; he imagined a victory would be easy against undisciplined troops, and headed by a woman: but he was miserably deceived; he had not only the mortification to lose the day, but to be made a prisoner by the hands of the English.

These conquests abroad were, however, no way favourable to the cause of liberty at home. As the king became victorious, he necessarily increased in

independence. The barons, clergy, and people, balanced each other's power : the royal power alone was growing beyond its bounds. Yet Edward was too sensible a monarch to give open disgust : he was only laying a foundation of despotism for his successor to build upon ; and had he been of equal capacity with his father, he might have seized upon public liberty with impunity. But I have transgressed the bounds of a letter, without coming to the conclusion of this prince's reign ; I must therefore refer you to my next.

LETTER XIX.

WE have already seen how unjustly the people distribute titles to kings, before they have deserved them : we have seen the second Edward called the father of his country, in the beginning of his reign ; and yet fall, in the end, a miserable sacrifice to its resentment : we have seen Philip of Valois, surnamed the Fortunate, upon coming to the crown, suffering the most signal defeats, some time after.

John succeeded Philip in the throne of France, but had his pretensions contested by Edward the Black Prince, who commanded the army of his father. This young prince's gallantry, bravery, and modesty, had won the affections of his soldiers, and he almost became invincible at their head. John, in the mean time, was at the head of a divided and factious nobility ; the government of France being, under this John, exactly what that of

England had been under a prince of the same name some reigns before. They had their parliaments of barons, despotic over their own hereditary possessions ; and they obliged John of France to sign a charter, very much resembling the Magna Charta, which had been signed by the English monarch. The warlike resources of France and England were, therefore, at this time very unequal. John was at the head of a nobility which acknowledged no subordination amongst each other, they led their dependent slaves to the fight, and obeyed superior command only as it suited their inclination : their king might more justly be said to command a number of small armies under distinct leaders, than one vast machine operating with uniformity and united force. The French barons paid their own soldiers, punished their transgressions, and rewarded their fidelity. But very different were the forces of England : the main body of the English army was composed of the people indiscriminately levied, paid by the king, and regarded him as the source of preferment or disgrace. Instead of personal attendance, the nobility contributed supplies in money : and there was only such a number of nobles in the army, as might keep the spirit of honour alive, without diminishing military subordination.

With an army thus composed, the Black Prince advanced to Poitiers, and ravaged a country that once belonged to his ancestors. King John, at the head of sixty thousand men, came up to give him battle. The English army was in such a situation, that he might readily have starved it into any terms he thought proper ; but he was impatient of such a delay. Both generals committed unpardonable

faults; the one in being led thus into a defile, the other in not taking a proper advantage [of the situation. But at this age we must not expect Cæsars or Hannibals to conduct armies; ignorant generals were opposed by generals still more ignorant. The battle of Poitiers, which soon followed, very much resembled that of Cressy: the superior discipline of the English army came off victorious; the flower of the French were cut off, and the king, being wounded in the face, was taken prisoner. A particular worth noting is, that he surrendered himself to one of his own subjects, whom he had formerly banished, and who now fought for his enemies. Of four sons the king of France had with him, the three eldest quickly fled, and by their cowardice, contributed to the defeat of the army: his fourth and youngest son, as yet but thirteen years old, still fought by his father, stuck near him in all the vicissitudes of the field, and, at length, was taken prisoner by his side. This is a remarkable instance of the education princes then gave their children.

This victory was in a great measure owing to the valour of the Black Prince; but his modesty, after conquest, was still more remarkable. In the most humble manner he remonstrated with his royal captive, who was complaining of his misfortunes, that still he had the comfort left to reflect, that though he lost the victory; yet his courage deserved it, and that a submissive deference to his person should never be wanting to make him forget his captivity. In April following the prince arrived in England, bringing his prisoner with him, entering into London in a remarkable manner: the prince, upon the left, rode a little black horse, while the royal prisoner was mounted on a stately white

charger, remarkable for its furniture and beauty.

Two kings, prisoners in the same court, at the same time, were considered as glorious conquests; but all that England gained by them was only glory. Whatever was acquired in France with all the splendors of triumph, was successively, and, in a manner, silently lost, without even the mortification of a defeat. The treaties that were made with the captive kings, as may be easily imagined, were highly to the advantage of the conquerors; but those treaties were no longer observed, than while the English had it in their power to enforce obedience. It is true, John held to his engagement as far as was in his power; but by being a prisoner he lost his authority, and his misfortunes rendered him contemptible. Upon his return from captivity, he not only found himself without finances, but at the head of an exhausted state, soldiers without discipline, and peasants without law. One of the chiefs of the banditti, upon this occasion, assumed the title of *The Friend of God, and the Enemy of Mankind*. A citizen of Sens, called John of Gouge, also got himself, by means of robberies, to be acknowledged king, and caused as many calamities by his devastations, as the real king had caused by his misfortunes. Such was the state of France upon the arrival of John from England; yet such was the absurdity of this monarch, that he immediately prepared for a crusade into the Holy land, before he was scarce replaced on his throne. Had his exhausted subjects been able to furnish him out for his chimerical project, it is probable he would have gone through with it, but their miseries were such, as to be even incapable of paying his ransom; upon which he again returned

to England, where he died in less than a year. It is said his passion for the countess of Salisbury was the real cause of this journey ; and, indeed, his age, he being near sixty, when men too often indulge this preposterous passion, and the gallantry of the times, seem to countenance this opinion.

If England, during these shining revolutions, gained any real advantage, it was only that of having a spirit of elegance and honour now diffused thro' every rank of people. The meanest soldier now began to follow his leader from love, and not compulsion ; he was brave from sentiment alone, and had the honour of his country beating at his heart, even though in the humblest station. This was the time when chivalry was at the highest, and all the successes of England, at this period, were owing to a concurrence of circumstances not much regarded by historians : *A romantic nation was led on by a romantic king.*

The spirit of chivalry, in some measure, served to soften the ferocity of the age ; it was a mixture of love, generosity and war. You have already seen that the sons of princes and the nobility, instead of being bred to arts, or polished by the sciences, were brought into the field at an early age, and instructed in no other arts but those of arms.

This instruction consisted in little more than merely how to sit on horseback, to wield the lance, to run at the ring, to flourish at a tournament, to fall at the feet of a mistress, and attain such accomplishments as innured their bodies to bear the fatigues of a campaign. The rules of tactics, of incampments, of stratagems, of fortifications, were but little minded by any.

Charles the Wise, of France, soon therefore,

by a finely conducted policy, regained whatever was lost by John, his predecessor. Edward the Black Prince, emaciated by a lingering consumption, died at the palace of Westminster, in the forty-sixth year of his age. England began to wear a face of discontent : the public treasure was lavished without any advantage to the kingdom ; the subjects laboured under numberless grievances ; in short, the kingdom seemed now to feel, that a nation might be at once very victorious and very unhappy. But, to compleat their miseries, Edward, their king, was now no longer what he was in the earlier part of his reign, he was sunk into unmanly indolence, and gave himself up to the enjoyment of loose desire, in the arms of a favourite concubine, called Alice Perrers. His parliaments made frequent remonstrances against this base oblivion of himself. The parliaments at this time, were not, as formerly, factions ready to oppress public liberty, but assemblies of wise and good men, sedulous for the common welfare, and of wisdom equal to the rectitude of their intentions : they frequently remonstrated against the king's and his minister's conduct : they, at one time had influence sufficient to get his concubine removed, but he soon took her back, for the passions of age are incurable. In her company he forgot all the burdens, duties, and fatigues of state, and left the kingdom to be plundered by a rapacious ministry. He did not live to feel the consequences of his bad conduct : he died at Shene in Surry, deserted by all, even by those who had formerly grown rich by his bounty. Richard II. son of the Black Prince, was appointed his successor, and came to govern a discontented people, a rapacious ministry, and an impoverished state. These

were the calamities consequent upon the errors of the preceding reign. Edward III. escaped them, but they fell heavily upon Richard, his successor.

LETTER XX.

THE faults of conquerors, as I have already observed generally fall upon their successors. Richard II. came to the throne *A. D.* 1377 of his grandfather, when yet but eleven, and found the people discontented and poor. The gentry were, in fact, luxurious; a spirit of profusion had entered with the spirit of gallantry; this necessarily produced indolence and rapacity among the higher orders of the kingdom, and their wants must necessarily produce an oppression of the rest.

The regents, however, appointed during the king's minority, seemed no way solicitous to appease these murmurings. The duke of Lancaster, better known by the name of John of Ghaunt, in the very beginning, disgusted the people by robbing two knights of a prisoner, which they had taken in war; and, at the same time, several expeditions against the French and Scots happened to be carried on without success. But a new engagement entered into by the crown, of assisting Portugal, at a time when the government was insulted by nearer enemies, raised the people's indignation. To support this unnecessary alliance, a subsidy was to be levied by a poll-tax, payable by all above the age of fifteen:

this, at last, raised the people's resentment into an insurrection.

Notwithstanding the numbers who by war, by a residence in towns, and by other means, had become free, yet there were still multitudes in the country who had lands in villanage, that, as yet, were only slaves to the lords from whom they held. These men had seen the charms of liberty, from its effects upon others; and they panted for freedom themselves. The luxury and opulence which they saw others enjoy, but for which they toiled, became an incentive to them to struggle for liberty also. Several of these had become opulent enough to purchase their freedom, but, by an unjust act of parliament, those purchases were declared of no validity. This the peasants considered as an infraction of the laws of humanity; and such indeed it actually was. A parliament of lords, and rich commoners, in this instance, seemed to have no regard for the rights of men whom they considered as slaves, as if some orders of mankind were held even too vile to find justice. The minds of the people were, therefore, thus prepared for sedition, when the manner of collecting the poll-tax provoked them to open revolt.

We have, in preceding reigns, perceived popular insurrections only in the towns; we now find the spirit of seditious liberty spreading into the country. Citizens at first began to perceive their own strength, and next the same manner of thinking is embraced by the peasant, whom the severity of the laws had annexed to the soil. We now begin to find a knowledge of the rights of humanity diffused even to the very lowest of the people, and exerting itself in rude and terrible efforts for freedom.

The present insurrection began in Essex, where a report was industriously spread, implying that the peasants were doomed to death; that their houses would be burned, and, their farms plundered. The country people, alarmed at this intelligence rose in their own defence, and, their numbers continually increasing, they advanced near London, to the number of an hundred thousand, with banners displayed. At the head of this undisciplined concourse was one Wat Tyler by trade a blacksmith. He was one of those hardy spirits so frequently found among the common English, ready to face any danger, and support every calamity. In exacting the poll-tax he had refused to pay for his daughter, alledging that she was under the age mentioned in the act of parliament. The brutal collector insisted upon her being a full grown woman, and, in order to ascertain his assertions, proceeded to acts of indecency: this provoked the father to such a degree, that he struck him dead at one blow with his hammer. Wat Tyler was therefore considered as a champion in the cause, and appointed spokesman to the people. It is easy to imagine the disorders committed by such a tumultuous assembly; they burned and pillaged wherever they came, and revenged their former miseries upon their masters the gentry, to whom they no longer acknowledged subjection. After having entered the Tower, and murdered such as they regarded as enemies, they divided themselves into bodies, and took up their quarters in different parts of the environs of the city. At length, Richard, riding towards Smithfield, invited them to a conference, in order to know and remove their grievances. Wat Tyler just entered Smithfield, when the king's knight delivered the royal

message, without alighting, not imagining he should stand upon ceremony: but this haughty demagogue, whose pride began to rise with his exaltation, was so offended at this want of respect that he was going to kill him if the king, who was himself advancing, had not ordered him to dismount. In Wat Tyler's conference with the king, being both on horseback he made several proposals, which, though censured by historians as extravagant, in reality breathe nothing but common justice. He desired that all slaves should be set free and that all commonages should be open to the poor as well as the rich. Whilst he made these demands, he now and then lifted up his sword in a menacing manner; which insolence so raised the indignation of William Walworth, mayor of London, who attended the king, that without considering to what danger he exposed his master, he stunned Tyler with a blow of his mace, and Sir Philpot, riding up, thrust his sword through his body. His followers, seeing their leader on the ground, encouraged each other to revenge his death, and their bows were now bent for execution, when Richard, though not quite sixteen years of age, instead of flying, rode up to the rebels, with admirable constancy and presence of mind, crying out with a resolute voice, *What my lieges, will you then kill your king? Be not concerned for the loss of your leader; I myself will now be your general: follow me into the field, and you shall have whatever you desire.*

The rebels immediately desisted; they followed the king as if mechanically; and the next day received a charter of freedom, and a general pardon. But these were only extorted grants; they were soon retracted; the ringleaders of the rebel-

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lion were tried, convicted of treason, and executed without mercy. The insurrections of the barons against the king, historians talk of with no great degree of animosity; the insurrections of the plebeians against the barons, in the present case, is branded with all the virulence of reproach. The punishment of the insurgent barons is generally stiled cruelty; the punishment of men who fought for native freedom is called justice; but we must be contented with such misrepresentations of facts, till philosophers can be found to write history.

We now see the first wrong step in Richard's conduct. He granted the rebels a charter, by which he gave the sanction of justice to their claims; but soon revoked this charter, which was apparently denying that justice they demanded. By these means he dissipated, indeed the combination for that time; but their hatred remained, and was propagated by the severity of punishment.

By this means Richard had effectually alienated the affections of the lower orders of people; it now only remained to make the parliament his enemies. Being come to this seventeenth year he began more plainly to discover his inclinations, which had hitherto been restrained by the authority of his governors. He had been bred up amidst flatterers, who never ventured to controul his will; he had seen the liberties taken by Edward III. over his subjects, and he fancied he might imitate him in them.

But Richard was not the conqueror of France and Scotland; he was hated by the poor, and envied by three guardians of great power, who secretly desired his crown; every error, therefore, in the conduct of a king so situated, must be attended with dangerous and violent effects. His indolence in repressing the

invasion of the Scots, and the machinations of France, were sufficient to give disgust to his conduct. All his faults were exaggerated, and his behaviour, even when right, publicly reprov'd. Unaccustom'd to controul, he laid a scheme to become absolute, and govern without his parliament's advice. Willing, however, to colour his arbitrary proceeding with the appearance of justice, he asked the opinion of the judges : their opinions have been too often found to be influenced by interest ; they gave it as their opinion, that the king was above law. Yet, perhaps, they might have been directed by ancient laws ; but custom had introduced new modes of thinking, and they did not pay a just deference to her power. This sentence the lords oppos'd by declarations ; and offering various reasons, were quickly at the head of forty thousand men to second their arguments ; but, what had still greater weight, they threatened to chuse a new king, which so operated upon the king's natural pusillanimity, that he consented to change his favourite ministers, who had advis'd him to extend the royal prerogative ; he renewed his coronation oath, and the same formalities were us'd as at the commencement of a new reign.

We have seen numbers of these insurrections without any apparent consequence ; the king circumscrib'd in one reign, and permitted to range at liberty in another : the only secret, at that time, for a king to become despotic, was to be ever in the field ; a warlike prince might command the nobility, as they were oblig'd to follow him in his campaigns ; and he might command the people, from that fondness which the vulgar have for a conqueror. Richard, however, was no way warlike ; but, being bred up

in the luxury and pride of a court, still expected deference and obedience, which could, at that time, be obtained only by merit in war.

Having, by the removal of his favourites, rendered himself still more feeble than before, he now ran into profusion, and endeavoured to forget this real weakness in extravagance and luxury. Such expenses necessarily created new demands upon the people, and they were bold enough to refuse: this necessarily produced new insurrections, and reiterated punishments on the part of the king. Punishment and arbitrary proceeding generally produce but a temporary and fatal security: Richard, however, insensible of this, imagined that now was the time to render himself despotic, and had even influence sufficient to prevail upon a parliament, called in the year 1397, to justify his pretensions. By this merciless session several of the nobility lost their lives; the archbishop of Canterbury was banished, the Earl of Arundel put to death, and the earl of Warwick sentenced to quit the kingdom.

Every thing seemed to contribute to support the king in the acquisition of his new-created power. The most forward to oppose his designs had suffered death or banishment; and they who still remained, were bribed to acquiesce, by pensions, grants, and places. The great officers of the crown, the governors of the towns and counties, were all devoted to his interest: yet all this was but a deceitful security; this was a power founded upon interest or terror alone, and not upon affection: the people hated him, and the generality of the nobles only obeyed him through constraint.

In this manner did this giddy monarch suffer himself to be deluded by vain hopes, and every day gave some new instance of straining the royal prerogative beyond what it could bear; but soon an opportunity offered to induce the people to refuse a blind obedience to his unjust commands, and to convince him of his former errors. A charge happening to be exhibited by the duke of Hereford against the duke of Norfolk, for having spoken seditious words against his majesty, in a private conversation; for want of sufficient proof to support the accusation, it was decreed by the Lords in parliament, that the dispute should be decided by single combat, according to the laws of chivalry, still in fashion. The time and the place were appointed for the determining this affair, and the combatants met accordingly. It may not be amiss to describe the ceremonies upon that occasion.

Hereford, the challenger, first appeared on a white courser, gayly caparisoned, armed at all points, with his drawn sword in his hand. When he approached the lists, the mareschal demanded, who he was? To which he answered, "I am Henry of Lancaster, duke of Hereford, come hither according to my duty, against Thomas Mowbray, duke of Norfolk, a false traitor to God, the king, the realm, and me." Then, taking the oath that his quarrel was just and true, he desired to enter the lists: which being granted, he sheathed his sword, pulled down his beaver, crossed himself on the forehead, seized his lance, passed the barrier, alighted and sat down in a chair of green velvet, placed at one end of the lists. He had scarce taken his seat, when the king came into the field, with great pomp, attended by the peers, the count of St. Pol, who came from France on purpose to see this famous

trial; and ten thousand men at arms to prevent tumults and disturbance. His majesty, being seated in his chair of state, the king at arms proclaimed, that none but such as were appointed to marshal the field, should presume to touch the lists, upon pain of death. Then another Herald proclaimed aloud, "Behold here Henry of Lancaster, duke of Hereford, who has entered the lists, to perform his devoir against Thomas Mowbray, duke of Norfolk on pain of being counted false and recreant." The duke of Norfolk immediately appeared in arms, mounted upon a barbed horse, with a coat of arms of crimson velvet, embroidered with lions of silver and mulberry-trees; and having taken his oath before the constable and marshal, entered the field, exclaiming aloud, "God defend the right!" Alighting from his horse, he placed himself in a chair of crimson velvet, opposite to his antagonist at the other end of the lists: then the marshal, having measured their lances, delivered one to the challenger, and sent a knight with the other to the duke of Norfolk, and proclamation was made that they should prepare for the combat. They immediately mounted their horses, then closed their beavers, fixed their lances on their rests; and the trumpets sounding a charge, the duke of Hereford began his career with great violence, but, before he could join his antagonist, the king threw down his warder, and the heralds interposed. Richard ordered their lances to be taken away, and banished the duke of Hereford for ten years, and the duke of Norfolk for life. Nothing could be a stronger proof of that unaccountable error which ever attended this king's designs, than this behaviour: the one was condemned to exile without

being charged with any offence, and the other without being convicted of any crime. The whole kingdom was displeased at the disappointment ; and this determination, in these ferocious times, even seemed to argue cowardice in the king. The duke of Norfolk was overwhelmed with grief and despondence at the judgment awarded against him : he retired to Venice, where, in a little time, he died of sorrow and chagrin. Hereford, on the contrary, bore his fate with great resignation, and behaved with such respectful submission when he went to take his leave, that the king remitted four years of his exile. From this he withdrew to Paris, where he met with a favourable reception from the French king, and, in all probability, would have married the only daughter of the duke of Berry, had not the match been interrupted by the interposition of Richard, who sent the earl of Salisbury, as his ambassador, to represent Hereford as a person who had been guilty of treasonable practices, and to assure the French court, that he would never be permitted to return to his own country. The princes of the blood alarmed at this declaration, broke off the match abruptly : and when Hereford expostulated with them on the subject, made him acquainted with their reasons for retracting the assent they had already given to this proposal. Such complicated injuries could not fail to aggravate the resentment of the duke against Richard, which he had hitherto concealed : and these, probably, first turned his thoughts upon acquiring the crown of England. No man could be better qualified for a project of this nature than the duke of Hereford : he was cool, cautious, discerning, and resolute ; he had distinguished himself by his courage, both at home and abroad : he was the idol of the soldiery,

and the favourite of the people: he was immensely rich, and, by blood or alliance, connected with all the noblemen in England. The greatest part of the kingdom not only murmured, but loudly exclaimed against the sentence of banishment which had been denounced against him, and ardently wished for an opportunity of doing him justice.

It was not long before they were gratified in this particular. His father, the duke of Lancaster, dying in February, the banished duke of Hereford ought to have succeeded to his titles and estate, by virtue of his hereditary right, as well as of the letters patent which he had obtained, even after his sentence, at Coventry; but Richard notwithstanding his former grants, allured by the greatness of the prize, by a sentence no less unjust than avaricious, seized the deceased Duke's effects and estate, and decreed that the son's banishment should be perpetual. The laws and liberties of the people were now in a most deplorable state: there was scarcely a man in the kingdom able, though all were willing, to oppose the arbitrary power usurped by the king. Finding himself above all restraint, he gave himself up to a soft and effeminate life, regardless of the good of the public. His ministers not to be behind their monarch, gave little attention to business, but saw, without any concern the English nation fall into the utmost contempt. In this situation the people naturally turned their eyes upon the banished duke, as the only person from whom they could expect redress; he was stimulated by private injuries, and had alliance and interest to give weight to his measures. The malecontents only waited for the absence of the king, to put these measures into execution.

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For this an occasion soon offered. The earl of Marche, presumptive heir to the crown, having been appointed the king's lieutenant in Ireland, was slain, in a skirmish, by the native Irish; and Richard was so incensed at this, that with a numerous army he went over to revenge his death in person. The duke of Lancaster, (for this was the title which the duke of Hereford assumed after his father's death,) being informed of Richard's departure from England, with three small vessels landed at Ravenspur, in Yorkshire, at first he only pretended that his sole aim was to obtain justice. The earl of Northumberland, who had long been a malecontent, and Henry Percy, his son surnamed Hotspur, immediately joined him with some troops: after this junction, the concourse of people coming to list under his banner was so great, that in a few days, his army was three-score thousand strong: so eager were the nobles and people to put themselves under the protection of a prince, who allured them with the prospect of freedom.

Whilst these things were transacting in England, Richard was in Ireland in perfect security; the contrary winds, which continued to blow above three weeks, hindered his receiving any news of the rebellion in his native dominions; but, when he heard of it, he immediately imprisoned the duke of Lancaster's brothers, whom he had taken over with him, and resolved to go immediately into England, to fight the enemy: yet, ever wavering in his resolutions, he was persuaded to stay some time longer, till he could prepare ships to transport all his forces at once. This delay completed his ruin: his friends in England had assembled an army of forty thousand men, who, upon

finding the king did not return to head them at the time appointed, dispersed. Richard, however, landed in England, and soon perceived his unhappy situation : he saw himself in the midst of an enraged people, none of whom he could rely on ; forsaken by those who, in the sunshine of power, contributed to fan his follies. Thus, not knowing whom to trust, or where to turn, he saw no other hopes of safety, but to throw himself on the generosity of his enemy ; he therefore sent him word, that he was ready to submit to whatever terms he thought proper to prescribe, and that he earnestly desired a conference. For this purpose the duke of Lancaster appointed a castle within about ten miles of Chester, where he came next day, with his whole army. Richard, who the day before, had been brought hither alone, descrying his rival's approach from the walls, went down to receive him : while the duke, after some ceremony, entered the castle in complete armour, only his head was bare in compliment to the fallen king. The king, approaching, received him with the salutation of, *Cousin of Lancaster, you are welcome* : at which the duke, bowing three times to the ground, replied in these terms, *My Lord the king, I am come sooner than you appointed, because, your people say, you have for one-and-twenty years governed with rigour and indiscretion, so that they are very ill satisfied with your conduct ; but if it please God, I will help you to govern them better for the time to come.* To this declaration the king made no other answer, but, *Fair cousin, since it pleases you, it pleases us likewise.*

The king, was soon taught to feel his wretched situation : he was led, triumphantly, through every town, amidst an infinite concourse of people, who

curfed him and extolled the duke. Long live the good duke of Lancafter, our deliverer ! was the general cry ; but, for the king, to ufe the emphatic words of the poet, *None cried, God blefs him.* After thefe repeated indignities, he was confined a clofe prifoner in the tower, there, if poffible to undergo ftill a greater variety of ftudied infolence and flagrant contempt. Unhappy Richard, thus humbled, began to lofe his fpirits with his power, nor was there any great fhare of policy required to induce him to refign his crown. Upon this refignation the duke of Lancafter founded his ftrongeft claim ; but, willing to fortify his pretenfions with every appearance of juftice, the parliament was foon induced to confirm his claim. The king was folemnly depofed, and the duke of Lancafter elected in his ftead, by the title of Henry IV. Thus began the conteft between the houfes of York and Lancafter, which, for feveral years after, deluged the kingdom with blood ; yet which contributed, in the *A. D. 1399.* end, to give ftrength and confiftency to the conftitution.

LETTER XXI.

NUMEROUS formalities are often ufed by princes only to cover impotence or impofture. Henry the Fourth, knowing the injuftice of his title to the crown, was at laft determined to give his coronation all poffible folemnity. A peculiar oil was ufed upon this occafion ; he affected great devotion ; and every action fhewed with how much humility he could be an ufurper.

Notwithstanding, the validity of his title, whatever pains he took to secure it, was controverted by some, and a conspiracy was soon formed to replace Richard on the throne. This was projected by several noblemen, and the particulars of the scheme were committed to writing, each being provided with a copy, signed by his confederates. Among other conspirators, the duke of Aumerle was one; and he had been one of a consultation, when it was resolved that the king should be assassinated at Oxford, at a tournament; but when that opportunity offered, he was missing among the number. It happened at that time, he was visiting his father, the duke of York, and sitting at dinner, let fall a paper from his bosom, which his father took up and examined. The duke finding the contents to be a conjuration against the king's life, flew with the utmost expedition to Windsor, to inform his Majesty of the plot: the son, guessing his father's intention, went by a shorter way, and obtained his pardon before his father's arrival, who, soon after coming, produced the paper with the conspirators names. Henry, alarmed at this intelligence, used the most vigorous efforts to dispel the rising storm.

The conspirators had by this time, dressed up one of Richard's servants, named Maudlin, in royal robes, giving out, that he was the deposed king, who having escaped from prison, was come to implore the assistance of his subjects. Pity is a passion for which the English have ever been remarkable; majesty in distress was sufficient to excite all their loyalty and compassion, and they flocked in great numbers round the conspiring leaders. Their army soon became considerable, and encamped near Cirencester, while the leaders took up their head

quarters in that city : but they were so careless, or unexperienced in war, that they neglected to place proper guards at the gates and the avenues of the place. This the mayor soon observed, and assembling four hundred men in the night, he secured the gates, so as to exclude the troops that were encamped without the walls, and then attacked the chiefs within. The duke of Surry and earl of Salisbury two of the principal conspirators, were taken, after an obstinate defence, and beheaded on the spot, by the mayor's order ; while the duke of Exeter and earl of Gloucester, two more of the party, escaped over the tops of the houses into the camp, with a view to storm the town at the head of their forces : but they found the tents and baggage abandoned by the soldiers, who hearing the noise and tumult within, had concluded that a party of the king's army had privately entered, and from this persuasion, fled with the utmost precipitation. The two lords, perceiving it out of their power to execute their design, parted, the better to make their escape ; but they had the misfortune to be taken, and shortly after lost their heads upon the scaffold.

If we compare the times which I now attempt to give you an idea of, with those of king John, or those of some reigns before him we shall find a great change with respect to the insurgent barons. In the former period they made frequent insurrections, were often taken in open rebellion, but as frequently pardoned ; in the period now in view, they were seldom taken without suffering the utmost rigour of the law. This plainly shews how much the power of the barons was sunk in the course of a couple of centuries. This revolution of power is, notwithstanding, natural and obvious : as the peo-

ple began to share the government with the nobles, the king was fixed upon as a fit person, to secure the balance; and both were contented to make him great, from a jealousy of each other. Noblemen were therefore now executed, not as petty monarchs, but offending subjects, and none but kings were considered as exempt from penal laws.

In all probability, the ill success of this enterprise hastened Richard's end. One of those assassins that are found in every court, ready to commit the most horrid crimes for reward, came down to the place of this unfortunate monarch's confinement, and, with eight other followers, rushed into his apartment. The king, concluding their design was to take away his life, resolved to sell it as dearly as he could: he wrested a pole-ax from one of the murderers, and soon laid four of the number dead at his feet; but he was at length overpowered, and struck dead by the blow of a battle-ax. Thus died the unfortunate Richard, in the thirty-third year of his age, while compassion for his sufferings and death made more converts to his family and cause, than ever his most meritorious actions during his life had gained him.

The death of Richard was very seasonable to his successor. The king of France had actually raised a vast armament, in order to replace the deposed monarch; and so much was Henry terrified at his intentions, that he ordered the bishop of Arundel to arm even the ecclesiastics of his province. The preparations of France might have contributed to hasten the fall of Richard; his death was no sooner known at the French court, than all thoughts of the invasion were laid aside, a truce for eight-and-twenty years was concluded between the two crowns,

and it was agreed that queen Isabel, who had been married to Richard, but whose marriage had never been consummated, should return to France, her native country.

A kingdom like England, at that time divided in itself, and surrounded by enemies on every side, could not expect a peace of any continuance: accordingly the Scots began to give new disturbances: and, when the armies of England were marched northward, in order to oppose their invasions, the Welsh rose to vindicate their ancient liberties. Owen Glendour, a name among the people of that country respected even to this day, led them on, and gained several victories; but his successes were only calculated to procure a temporary triumph, and no lasting advantages. Whatever honour the English lost on the side of Wales, they gained on that of Scotland. The histories of those times are filled with the petty victories and defeats on either side; but, as they neither served to alter nor transfer power, they scarce deserve a place in the chronicles of a kingdom.

While Henry was employed in those unavailing campaigns, a more dangerous storm threatened him from his own subjects. He claimed the prisoners that were taken from the Scots by the earl of Northumberland, for himself; while the earl, flushed with victory, and considering himself as the supporting column of Henry's throne, resented his demand. A scheme was laid, in which the Scots and Welsh were to combine their forces, and assist Northumberland in elevating Mortimer, as the true heir to the English throne. As soon, therefore, as the confederates were prepared, the Percys of Northumberland suddenly appeared in arms in the North; but

the earl himself falling ill, his brother and son marched with his troops to join the Welsh, who were advanced as far as Shropshire. Upon the junction of these two armies, they published a manifesto, which complained of many real grievances, and aggravated others. Henry, who had received no intelligence of their designs, was extremely surpris'd at the news of this rebellion; but, fortunately, having an army in readiness, he marched towards Shrewsbury to meet the rebels, who were there encamped. Upon coming up to them, proposals for a mediation were offered, and such favourable terms promised, that it was thought it would end in a reconciliation; but distrust on both sides soon broke off the treaty, and the battle soon began. In this Henry obtained a complete victory; and Hotspur, the earl of Northumberland's son, so renowned for former successes, was slain. Mean time the earl of Northumberland, being recovered, was advancing with a body of troops to reinforce the army of the malecontents, and take upon him the command; but hearing by the way of his son's and brother's misfortune, he dismissed his troops, not daring to keep the field with so few forces before a victorious army. The king, to terminate this troublesome affair as soon as possible, promised the earl an absolute pardon, in case he obeyed without delay, menacing him with utter ruin, should he refuse the proffered favour. The earl, finding himself without resource, chose rather to throw himself upon the king's mercy, than lead a precarious and indigent life in exile: he therefore repaired to York, and threw himself at the king's feet, who punctually performed his promise. Probably, he thought the

criminal was already sufficiently punished in the death of his son and brother.

The extinction of one rebellion only seemed to give rise to new. The archbishop of York, being dissatisfied, and eager to revenge the king's death, by whom he was promoted, entered into a confederacy, with some other lords, to dethrone Henry. Northumberland, though pardoned, was again among the number they were, however, once more prematurely discovered, and most of the conspirators died by the hands of the executioner; but Northumberland had the good fortune to escape into Scotland.

While the kingdom was thus torn by faction, and threatened with foreign invasions, a still more terrible calamity threatened it from the clergy. Since Wickliffe published his opinions, about the end of the reign of Edward III. his doctrine was so spread, that the clergy were in continual apprehensions of its prevailing. Henry was now to catch at every assistance, in order to strengthen his usurped power: among others, that of the clergy was not to be despised; he therefore earnestly recommended to his parliament the care of the church's conservation. How reluctant soever the house of commons might be to persecute a sect whose only crime was error, the credit of the court, and the cabals of the clergy, obtained at length, an act for the burning obstinate heretics. This statute was no sooner passed, than William Sawfre, a follower of Wickliffe, was burned alive, by virtue of the king's writ, delivered to the mayor of London. This was the first man in England who suffered death for the sake of religion: but, the fires once kindled, the clergy would not suffer them soon to be extinguished: they readily perceived,

that a power of burning their enemies would revive that temporal power which they possessed about three centuries before : in this they were not mistaken ; they again, by this means renewed their pristine authority, but with this difference, that as, in the times of the Saxon heptarchy, their power was founded in the love of the people, in the present case, it had its original wholly in their fears.

By these means Henry surmounted all his troubles, and the kingdom enjoyed tranquillity. He had nothing to fear from France, distracted by its own intestine divisions ; the Welsh sued for peace ; the regent of Scotland dreaded a rupture with England, lest Henry should send home the king of Scotland, whom he had made his prisoner, and thus terminate the regent's delegated power : add to this, the malecontents in England were too inconsiderable to attempt any thing further against the government. During this calm, the king endeavoured to efface the impressions of severity, which his conduct had made upon the people, by affecting a popularity and regard for the welfare of the subject ; a never-failing method to conciliate the affection of the English in favour of their sovereign. While he thus laboured, not without success, to retrieve the reputation he had lost, his son, the prince of Wales, seemed bent upon incurring public aversion ; he gave a loose to all kinds of debauchery, and was surrounded by a crew of profligate wretches, who made a practice of committing the most illegal acts of violence. The father was extremely mortified at this degeneracy in his eldest son, who had already exhibited repeated proofs of his valour, conduct and generosity ; virtues which he now seemed to renounce ; while the splenetic and

gloomy trembled at the prospect of his succeeding to the throne. Nevertheless, in the midst of these excesses, the nobleness of his heart seemed, at intervals, to emerge from the gulph in which it was plunged. One of his dissolute companions, having been brought to trial for some misdemeanor, was condemned, notwithstanding all the interest he could make in his favour; and he was so exasperated at the issue of the trial, that he struck the judge upon the bench. This magistrate, whose name was Sir William Gascoigne, behaved with the dignity that became his office; he forthwith ordered the prince to be committed to prison. When this transaction was reported to the king, who was an excellent judge of mankind, he could not help exclaiming, in a transport of joy, Happy is the king who has a magistrate endowed with courage to execute the laws upon such an offender: still more happy in having a son willing to submit to such chastisement!

This, in fact, is one of the first great instances we read in the English history, of a magistrate doing justice in opposition to power. The government was now much changed from what it was in the times even of Richard, when judges were but the ministers of royal caprice.

Henry did not long out-live this transaction. Perceiving his end approach, he disposed his mind to the duties of devotion, and took the cross, fully determined to consecrate the remaining part of his life in fighting the cause of the pilgrims at Jerusalem, which was at that time considered as the cause of heaven. This is not the first instance we have seen of princes endeavouring to strike up a bargain with Providence, and promising to perform parti-

cular acts of devotion, upon being indulged with a longer period of existence. He imparted his design to a great council, assembled for that purpose; and began to make preparations for the expedition, when his disorder increased to such a degree, that he was obliged to lay aside his intention, and think of a voyage of greater importance. As his constitution decayed, his fears of losing the crown redoubled, even to childish anxiety; he would not sleep unless the royal diadem was laid upon his pillow. One day, being in a violent paroxysm of his disorder, the prince of Wales took up the crown and carried it away; but soon after, the king recovering his senses, and missing the crown, he asked what was become of it, and understanding the prince had carried it off, "What," said the king to the prince with marks of indignation, "would you rob me of my dignity before my death?" "No," replied the prince: "Thinking your majesty was dead, I took the crown as my lawful inheritance; but now I see you alive, I restore it with much more pleasure, and may God grant you many happy days to enjoy it in peace!" So saying, he replaced the crown upon the pillow, and having received his father's blessing, dutifully retired. The king was surprised with his last fit at his devotions before the shrine of St. Edward the Confessor, in Westminster abbey, from whence he was carried to the Jerusalem chamber. When recovered from his swoon, perceiving himself in a strange place, he desired to know if the apartment had any particular name: being told of its appellation, he now concluded a prophecy fulfilled; which said, that he should die in Jerusalem; and, after some good instructions to his successor, he recommended his soul to heaven, and

soon after expired, on the twentieth day of March, in the forty-sixth year of his age, and the fourteenth of his reign.

Henry whatever he might have been as a man, was certainly an excellent king. The government assumed both a form and liberty under his administration : the distinction between the nobility and the people was rendered less considerable ; and the magistrates were less arbitrary and less venal.

LETTER XXII.

THE death of Henry IV. gave his people but little affliction, among whom he never acquired any popularity ; but the *A. D. 1413.* rejoicings made for the succession of his son, Henry V. were manifest and sincere. This prince was their favourite, notwithstanding the profligacy of his youth : in the very height of riot and extravagance, he would, sometimes, give instances of the sublimest virtues. But his courage seemed to be what peculiarly won their affection and esteem : at this barbarous period, courage seemed to be regarded as the only virtue : courage and superstition then made up the whole system of human duty, and stamped the character of heroism.

The people of Europe were, by this time, degenerated from what they were even two hundred years before ; a continuance of war had blotted out the very traces of morality. The vices of the clergy had drawn upon them contempt and opposition, which they returned, not by reforming themselves, but by persecuting those who opposed them. This

reign was begun in attempting to extirpate the heresy of Wickliffe. John Oldcastle, baron of Cobham, was the most considerable protector of this sect: he was the king's domestic, and stood highly in his favour. The archbishop of Canterbury, therefore, undertook to prejudice him in the royal opinion, and endeavoured to persuade the young monarch, that fire and faggot were the only instruments capable of saving an heretic from future damnation; and that Oldcastle's opinions deserved the severest punishments of the law. The king was, at length, persuaded to talk with Oldcastle in private, and, finding him immoveable, gave him up to the fury of his enemies. Persecution ever produces those crimes which it endeavours to abolish. Oldcastle was condemned, but, escaping, was obliged to become, in fact, that guilty person which they had at first falsely represented him; he headed a body of malecontents, and refused to be amenable to the royal power. This unhappy man, after a variety of distresses, at length fell into the power of his enemies; and never did the cruelty of man invent, or the crimes of the delinquent draw down, more torments than he was made to endure: he was hung up with a chain by the middle, and by a slow fire burned, or rather roasted alive.

Such spectacles as these must naturally produce a disgust in the people both to the government and the clergy; but, to turn their minds from these hideous spectacles, Henry was resolved to take advantage of the troubles in which France was, at that time, involved. Charles, who was then king of France, was subject to frequent fits of lunacy, which totally disqualified him from reigning: in these intervals the ambition of his vassals and courtiers

tiers had room for exertion, and they grew powerful from the weakness of their king. Isabella, of Bavaria, his queen, was at the head of one faction; the duke of Burgundy, of another: the faction of the children of the Duke of Orleans was considerable; that only which held to the king was feeble. Each of these, as they happened to prevail, branded their captives with the names of traitors, and the gibbets were at once hung with the bodies of the accused and the accusers.

This was thought a most favourable opportunity to rescue, from France, those grants that had formerly been given up by treaty: Henry, therefore, invaded that kingdom with an army of fifty thousand men. He took Harfleur, and advanced into a country already rendered desolate by factions, and which he now totally laid waste by a foreign invasion: but, though the enemy made but a feeble resistance, yet the climate seemed to fight for them; a contagious dysentery carried off three parts of Henry's soldiers. In such a situation he had recourse to an expedient common enough in the barbarous times I am describing; he challenged the Dauphin to single combat, offering to stake his pretensions on the event. This challenge, as might naturally be expected, was rejected; and the French, though disagreeing internally, now seemed united at the appearance of foreign danger.

Henry soon began to repent of his rash inroad into a country, where disease and a powerful army, every moment threatened destruction; and, therefore, thought of retiring to Calais. In this retreat, which was at once both painful and dangerous, Henry took every method to inspire his troops with courage and perseverance, and shewed them, in

himself, an example of patience and resignation. In the mean time the French army was drawn up to obstruct his passage, nor was there any possibility of his passing them without a battle; yet even that could promise but small hopes of victory: his army was wasted with disease, their spirits worn down with fatigue, destitute of provisions, and but nine thousand in number, to sustain the shock of an enemy amounting to an hundred and fifty thousand. This disparity as it raised the courage of the French, so it impressed the English with terror. So confident were the French leaders of success, that they began to treat for the ransom of their prisoners. On the 25th of October, 1415, the two armies drew up in battle array, early in the morning, near the castle of Agincourt. A narrow ground, flanked on one side by a wood, on the other by a rivulet, was to be the scene of action. The constable of France commanded the French, and Henry, with Edward, duke of York, the English. Both armies, for some time, kept silently gazing at each other, as if afraid to begin; which Henry perceiving, with a chearful countenance, cried out, "My friends, since they will not begin, let us set them the example; come on and the Blessed Trinity be our protection! And now the whole army set forward with a shout. The French still continued to wait their approach with intrepidity, when the English archers let fly a shower of arrows, three feet long, which did great execution. The French cavalry advancing, to repel these, two hundred bowmen, who lay till then concealed, rising on a sudden, let fly among them. The English, seeing their confusion, now threw by their arrows and fell upon them sword in hand: though enfeebled by disease, yet they recompensed the defect by valour. The

French at first repulsed the assailants; but they, resolving to conquer or die, again burst in upon the enemy, with such impetuosity that they gave way: in the mean time, a body of English horse, which had been concealed in a neighbouring wood, rushing out, flanked the French infantry; and now a total disorder began to ensue.

The first line of the enemy being thus routed, the second line began to march up to interrupt the progress of victory. Henry therefore, alighting from his horse, presented himself to the enemy with an undaunted countenance; and at the head of his men fought on foot encouraging some, and assisting others. Eighteen French cavaliers, who were resolved to kill him or die in the attempt, rushing forth together, advanced, and one of them stunned him with a blow of his battle-ax; they then fell upon him in a body, and he was just going to sink under their blows, when David Cam, a valiant Welshman, and two more of the same country, came to his aid: they soon turned the attention of the French from the king; but being overpowered themselves, they fell dead at his feet. The king had now recovered his senses, and more help coming in, the eighteen Frenchmen were all slain; upon which he knighted the brave Welshmen who had valiantly fallen in his defence. The heat of the battle still increasing, his courage seemed to increase; and now the thickest of the battle was gathered round his person; his brother, being fallen down by his side, stunned with the blow of a club, he covered him for a while; but receiving another blow himself, it threw him on his knees: he soon, however, recovered, and his valour seemed to inspire his troops with fury; they ran headlong upon

the enemy, and, by an unexpected attack, put them into such disorder that their leaders could never after bring them to the charge. The duke of Alencon, who commanded the second line, seeing it fly, resolved by one desperate stroke to retrieve the day, or fall in the attempt : wherefore, running up to King Henry, and crying aloud that he was the duke of Alencon, he discharged such a blow on his head, that it carried off part of the king's helmet : Henry not being able to ward off the blow, soon returned it, by striking the duke to the ground ; and he was soon killed by the surrounding crowd, all the king's efforts to save him from their fury being ineffectual.

The first two lines being thus dispersed, the third refused to assist them, and marched off without fighting. The king, therefore, thinking himself thus sure of victory, was surprised with an account that his baggage was plundered by the enemy : just struck with an apprehension that the French had rallied, and being sensible that the number of his prisoners was greater than that of his army, he rashly ordered all the prisoners to be put to death ; which order was accordingly executed. This severity tarnished the glory which his victory would otherwise have acquired ; but all the heroism, and all the virtues of that age, are tinged with barbarity.

This victory, however great it may appear, was rather ostentatious than useful : it acquired the English glory, but not dominion ; and while it settled Henry's interest more firmly in the hearts of his subjects, it only served to inspire him with love of new conquests. With this view, therefore, he returned to England, in order to procure new stores of men and money.

The war between the two kingdoms, from this period, seemed to be carried on rather by negotiations, treasons, plots, and fomented jealousies, than by the force of arms. France was but as one vast theatre of crimes, murders, punishments, and devastations; the duke of Orleans was assassinated by the duke of Burgundy, and he, in his turn, fell by the treachery of the Dauphin; while the son, desiring to revenge his father's death, acknowledged Henry as lawful heir to the crown, and a treaty was concluded between Henry and the young duke of Burgundy at Troyes, by which he was acknowledged heir to the crown of France, after the death of Charles, who still reigned, though, by his diseases, rendered totally incapable of business. Catharine, the French king's daughter, was given to Henry in marriage; and it was resolved, that the Dauphin should be brought to an account for the murder of the late duke of Burgundy. Things being adjusted in this manner, Henry entered the city of Paris without opposition, and there conducted the government at his pleasure; while the feeble Charles was attended as a king indeed, but with scarce even the liberty of a subject.

The Dauphin, in the mean time, wandered about, a stranger to his own dominions, while Henry returned to London, to raise new subsidies, and new troops, to secure his late conquests. His presence, as might be expected, inspired his subjects with joy; but they at the same time could not be much pleased with a conquest, which seemed likely to transfer the seat of empire from among them. The parliament, upon various pretences, refused him a supply equal to his demands: however, he again set sail with a new-raised army, and the Dauphin, upon his ap-

pearance, thought fit again to retire. Henry then entered Paris, and while Charles had but a small court, he was attended with a very magnificent one. On Whitfunday they dined together in public, the two kings and the two queens, with their crowns on their heads ; Charles, indeed receiving apparent homage, but Henry commanded with absolute authority. After this he prepared to stop the progress of the enemy, who had already taken some towns ; but whilst he flattered himself with a speedy victory, he was attacked with a fistula, which the physicians at that time were too unskilful to treat with judgment. He died at the castle of Vincennes, with the same intrepidity with which he lived, and was buried at Westminster-abbey. His reign, during the short time he lived, which was but thirty-four years, was rather splendid than serviceable ; the treasures of his native country were lavished upon conquests that to them were unprofitable. His military fame acquired him the reputation of every other good quality ; he favoured the clergy, and they have returned the debt to his memory. In general, the good or the erroneous conduct of a prince, appears rather after his death than during his life-time ; and the successors of imprudent kings are often taxed with errors not their own, as we shall presently see. He died, however, fortunate, by falling in the midst of his triumphs, and leaving his subjects with reputation. Charles, who died two months after him, finished a wretched reign, long past in phrenzy, and with contempt, branded by all France, and leaving the most miserable subjects upon earth.

LETTER XXIII.

OUR triumphs at this time in France produced scarce any good effects at home : as we grew warlike, we became brutal ; and, panting after foreign possessions, we forgot the arts of cultivating those that lay nearer home. Our language, instead of improving, was daily becoming more barbarous : Langland and Chaucer, about a century before, seemed to have drawn it from obscurity, and enriched it with new terms and combinations ; but it was now relapsed into its former grossness, and no poet or historian of note was born in this calamitous period.

Henry VI. successor to Henry V. was not quite a year old when he came to the throne ; and his relations began, soon *A. D. 1422.* after, to dispute the government during his minority. The duke of Bedford was appointed, by parliament, protector of England, defender of the church, and first counsellor of the king ; his brother, the duke of Gloucester, was to govern in his absence, while he conducted the French war ; but several others aspired at this post as well as he. The second rank in every kingdom, as being the most powerful, is generally the most envied situation. The first step his enemies took to render the duke of Gloucester odious, was to accuse his wife, the dutchess, of witchcraft. She was charged with conversing with one Sir Roger Bolingbroke, a priest, and reputed necromancer, and one Mary Gurdemain, who was said to be a witch : it was asserted that, with their assistance, she made a figure

of the king in wax ; this the accusers said was placed before a gentle fire, and, as the wax dissolved, the king's strength was wasted ; and, upon its total dissolution, his life was to be at an end. This charge Bolingbroke utterly denied ; but the dutchess confessed that she had desired the woman to make a philtre, to secure the affections of the duke her husband. Neither their innocence, nor her rank, could protect them : she was condemned to penance and perpetual imprisonment ; Bolingbroke was hanged, and the woman burnt in Smithfield.

Henry, during these contests of his ministers, was, at first, from age, incapable of conducting the reins of government : and, when he became adult, he was equally incapable, from ignorance and imbecillity. Whether it was that his governors had kept him in ignorance, in order to prolong their own power, or whether he was naturally weak, history does not clearly determine. The earl of Suffolk, one of those who shared the power at that time, thought the best way of managing the king would be to marry him to a woman who was herself capable of reigning alone. He had still another motive, which was to create a new power to oppose the duke of Gloucester, who was his enemy, and an obstacle in the road to his ambition : for this purpose, he fixed upon Margaret of Anjou, daughter of Rene, king of Sicily, and niece of the king of France. She was a princess of uncommon resolution, and great penetration, but entirely without fortune ; for which, it was said, her other good qualities were sufficient to atone. This match the duke of Gloucester vainly opposed ; the match went forward, and the new queen shewed her resentment, by proving a formidable enemy, willing and able to undo him.

She first began her reign with removing him from the council board. To palliate this proceeding, persons were suborned to accuse him of cruelty and injustice : to these accusations he pleaded his innocence with such force of evidence, that the council, though consisting of his enemies, were obliged to acquit him. Still, however, the queen, bent upon his ruin, ordered him to be apprehended, and accused before the parliament, summoned for this purpose. As the people thought him innocent, it was expected he would come off now as he had before ; but, on the day he was to make his defence he was found dead in his bed, though without any signs of violence upon his body.

This death rendered the queen and the king equally odious, the queen especially was charged with the murder, and the dignity of her station only served to render her a more conspicuous object of reproach. But what still contributed to render the people discontented with the administration, was the indifferent success of their arms in France. Triumphs and conquests were ever a means of repressing the discontents of the people ; but the present government, to their quarrels at home, added the misfortune of being defeated abroad.

Upon the death of Henry V. the dauphin of France asserted his claim to the throne of that kingdom under the title of Charles VII. Nothing could be more deplorable than his situation upon coming to the crown, of which he was only the nominal possessor : the English were masters of almost all France. Henry VI. was solemnly invested with regal power, by legates from Paris. The duke of Bedford with a numerous army in the heart of the kingdom, confirmed his claim, and the

duke of Burgundy was steady in the English alliance. Wherever Charles attempted to face the enemy, he was overthrown; he could scarcely rely on the friends next his person, and his authority was insulted, even by his own servants. In this situation, nothing but miraculous assistance, or pretended miracles could save him. To the last expedient he had recourse, and it fully answered his intentions. The French, from a vanquished nation, are suddenly going to be victorious; and the English, who had hitherto been deemed invincible, are going to be every where worsted, and, at length totally driven out of the kingdom.

A gentleman on the frontiers of Lorraine, whose name was Baudricourt, was the person who first resolved to put this happy imposture into practice. He fixed upon the servant-maid of an inn for this purpose, and she was instructed at once to perform the duties of a warrior and a prophetess: this was Joan of Arc, the renowned maid of Orleans; a woman of masculine strength and courage, pretending to be but eighteen, but in reality, twenty-seven years old. She equipped herself in the arms and habit of a man, and it was given out that she was inspired: she was brought before the king, examined by the Doctors of the University, and they, either deceived, or willing to assist the imposture, affirmed that her commission was from heaven. The vulgar, as ready to give credit to inspiration as to witchcraft, easily came into the imposture, and acquired new hopes and confidence of success.

The English were, at that time, besieging the city of Orleans, Charles's last resource, and were upon the point of becoming masters of it: Joan under-

took to raise the siege, and to render herself the more remarkable, ordered a sword to be brought her from the tomb of a knight buried in the church of Fierbois. She addressed the soldiers as a messenger from heaven, and assured them that providence would strengthen their arms. She marched at their head, and delivered Orleans; routed the English wherever they opposed; prophesied that the king should be crowned at Rheims, and she herself assisted at the solemnity which she had foretold: she was present at the coronation, holding in her hand the standard under which she had been so often victorious.

This chain of successes, and the dignity which his late coronation gave the French king, now entirely turned the scale in his favour; the English lost the kingdom by the same methods the French had lost it before: while Charles united his forces, and proceeded with dispatch, they were quarrelling among themselves, and losing the seasons of success. In the midst of the king's good fortune, however, Joan of Arc, his brave champion, was taken prisoner, as she was protecting the rear of her men in a retreat. The joy of the English upon this occasion is not to be expressed; and the duke of Bedford, their general thought no method could be so proper to restore their lost courage as to prosecute his prisoner for witchcraft. It is a disagreeable reflection upon human nature, that judges almost ever determine on the side of authority: she was found guilty by several bishops and doctors of the university of Paris. She was at first condemned as a sorceress and an heretic, and enjoined to live, by way of penance, upon bread and water, and to remain in prison for life: some time after, under colour of

her relapsing, she was publicly burnt for a witch. Superstition adds virulence to the natural cruelty of mankind; and this cruel sentence served only to inflame the hatred between the contending powers, without mending the cause of the English. In vain the brave Talbot and his son strove to maintain the declining interest of the English in France: in the year 1447, the French king made his triumphant entry into Paris, and, in a sequel of thirteen years more, the English were entirely banished from France; they were only left in possession of Calais and Guienne, and lost for ever all the fruits of the victories of Poitiers, and Agincourt. Such is the end of ambition! The only consequences of their conquests there, were to deluge that kingdom with the blood of its slaughtered inhabitants, and their own.

It may easily be supposed, that the losses of the English in France, and the divisions of their rulers at home, must raise factions. In this period of calamity, a new interest was revived, which seemed to have lain dormant in the times of prosperity and triumph: the duke of York began to think of asserting his right to the crown of England. This nobleman was descended, by the mother's side, from Lionel, one of the sons of Edward III. The reigning king was descended from John of Gaunt, a son of the same Edward, but younger than Lionel: thus the duke of York's claim was prior to that of Henry. The ensign of the duke was a white rose, that of Henry a red. This gave name to the two houses, whose contentions were about to drench the kingdom with slaughter.

The Duke of Suffolk and the Queen were now at the head of affairs, and managed all things with

unlimited authority. As he had made his way to power by the blood of Gloucester, he was resolved to establish himself by the usual resources of tyranny, by cruelty to his inferiors, and flattery to the queen. This unjust and ill managed power first drew against him the opposition of the duke of York: perhaps the cause of the public was the only motive for his first resistance. Almost every malecontent has some real, and some fictitious causes of complaint: he therefore had recourse to parliament, and accused the duke of Suffolk as the source of all the nation's disgraces in France. This accusation might have been false: but the real motive, which was Suffolk's power, and the cruel use he made of it, was left unmentioned, although it was true. The court to content the people, condemned him to banishment, and he embarked in a little vessel to take his passage to France; but he could not escape his destiny. He was met in his passage by an English man of war; the captain, having a mind to search the ship the duke was in, and, finding him there, ordered his head to be struck off without further delay. There is little in the transactions of these times to interest us on the side of either party; we see crimes on both sides, and scarce a shining character or a virtue to animate the narrative.

By the death of the duke of Suffolk, his rival, of York, saw himself rid of a potent enemy, and found the discontents of the people against the administration daily increase. Among the insurrections of these unhappy times, was that headed by Jack Cade, who led a tumultuous body of forces to London, to redress their grievances, and there beheaded the Lord Treasurer. The government might readily perceive the disaffection of the populace, by his reception from

the city of London, who opened their gates to him: however, upon the king's proclamation, his adherents, after a day or two, were dispersed, and he himself taken and slain. In the mean time the duke of York secretly fomented these disturbances, and, pretending to espouse the cause of the people, wrote to the king from his retreat in Wales, advising a reformation in the ministry. His letters of expostulation were soon backed by an army; he marched up to London, but found an unexpected repulse from the city, which shut its gates upon him. In this dilemma he offered to disband his army, if the duke of Somerset, who was at that time the envied object in power, should be sent to the Tower: this request was seemingly complied with, contrary to his expectation: and now coming to court to accuse him in person, he was surprized to see the duke of Somerset, who was hid behind the hangings, suddenly come forth, and retort the accusation upon him. York now perceived his danger, and repressed the impetuosity of his accusation. As soon as he left the presence, the king commanded him to be apprehended; but such was the duke's authority, or such the timidity of the king's council, that they suffered him to retire, upon promising strict obedience for the future.

This reconciliation was only temporary: he still aspired at the crown, and, the king falling ill, by his intrigues, he had sufficient art to be taken into the number of the privy council. This was a fatal blow to Henry's interest: the duke of York, now let into a share of the authority, and secure of the affections of the people, carried all before him. The duke of Somerset was sent to the tower, and the parliament declared his rival, Protector of the

realm. This power the duke of York for some time enjoyed without controul ; till the unhappy king, recovering from his dizziness, as if awaking from a dream, perceived, with surprise, that he was stripped of his authority. Margaret his queen, did all in her power to rouse him to a sense of his situation : he therefore began by deposing the duke from his power, who instantly had recourse to arms. The impotent monarch, thus obliged to take the field, was dragged after his army to the battle of St. Albans, where he was routed by the duke of York ; and Somerset, his general was slain. The king being wounded, and hiding himself in a cottage near the field of battle, was taken prisoner, and treated with seeming respect : from thence he was brought along, in triumph, to London ; and the duke permitting him still to enjoy the title of king, reserved to himself that of protector, in which consisted all the power of the crown.

Henry was now but a prisoner, treated with the forms of royalty ; yet, indolent and sickly as he was, the title alone seemed sufficient for him. At last, his friends induced once more to re-assert his prerogative, the duke of York again retired, to resist the designs of the queen. Mutual distrust once more brought their arms to the field, and the fate of the kingdom was to be decided by the sword. On the king's side, the queen seemed the only acting general : she ranged the army in battalia, gave the necessary orders, while the poor king was led about, from place to place, an involuntary spectator of those martial preparations. The army on the opposite side was, in the absence of the duke of York, commanded by the earl of Warwick, the most celebrated General of his age ; a man formed for times of trouble ;

extremely artful, and extremely brave ; equally skilful in the council and the field ; and born to give and to take away kingdoms at pleasure. After many battles without effect, and designs without consequence, both armies, at last, met on a plain near Northampton : the queen's army consisted of five-and-twenty thousand men, the army of Warwick, of forty thousand. Never was greater animosity between the chiefs of an army before ; both pretending to fight for the king, whose authority they equally attempted to destroy. While the queen went about from rank to rank, the king staid in his tent, waiting the issue of the battle with female doubts and apprehensions. Both sides fought five hours with the utmost obstinacy, but the good fortune of the earl of Warwick was superior to that of the queen ; she was conquered, and had the misfortune to see the king taken prisoner in his tent. Thus Henry was once more brought back in triumph to his capital.

A parliament was now called to give a face to this successful rebellion. The duke of York, tho' formerly contented with the title of protector, now claimed the crown. Our prospects widen as we rise. The cause of Henry and the duke was solemnly debated in the house of peers : each side produced their reasons for or against the conqueror. This was the first time that a true spirit of liberty ever appeared to exert itself in England, and in which victory did not determine every enquiry. The duke of York, though a conqueror, could not entirely gain his cause : it was determined that Henry should possess the throne during life, and that the duke of York should be his successor, to the utter exclusion of the prince of Wales.

The queen to all appearance, seemed now utterly destitute of every resource ; but though she had lost all, she yet retained her native perseverance and intrepidity. She was a woman of a great mind, and some faults ; but ambition seemed to be what called them into action. Being now a fugitive, distant from the capital, opposed by a victorious army, and a consummate general, she still tried every resource to repair her disastrous circumstances : she flew to Wales, animated her old friends, acquired new, and raised an army to defend her cause. She, and her old enemy, the duke of York, once more met upon Wakefield Green, near the castle of Sandal : fortune this day turned the victory on her side ; the duke of York was slain ; the duke of Rutland, his second son, fell in the fight ; and the father's head, being cut off, was fixed upon the walls of York.

Margaret, being now victorious, marched towards London, in order to give the king liberty. The earl of Warwick, who was now at the head of the Yorkists, still commanded an army, in which he led about the captive king, to give a sanction to his attempt. Another battle was to drench the kingdom with the blood of its inhabitants, the queen and the earl met near St. Albans, where the queen was once again victorious; she had the pleasure to see the general, by whom she was once defeated, now fly in his turn ; and, what added to her glory, she had the fortune to release the king her husband from his captivity. Her triumph was great, though contaminated with cruelty ; but it was of short continuance. The city of London was to be gained, but Warwick had already secured it in his interests : the citizens also feared her tumultuous army, and refused to open their gates upon her summons. In the mean

time, Warwick assembled the people in St John's fields, and shewing them the son of the late duke of York, demanded, whether they chose to have him or Henry for their king? Upon which the people cried out A York! an assembly was quickly called, and the young duke being present, they elected him king, by the name of Edward IV. and conducted him, with great ceremony, to the palace where Henry used to lodge when within the walls of the city.

In the mean time queen Margaret collected a great army in the north, amounting to sixty thousand men at arms. She was now to strike her strongest blow. The command of this army was given to a person who acted under her directions. On the other side, Warwick conducted young Edward, at the head of forty-thousand men, to oppose her. Both sides, at length, met near Santon, in the county of York. Never was England depopulated by so terrible a day. What a dreadful sight to behold almost an hundred thousand men, of the same country, fighting to satisfy the empty ambition of one or two weak and empty wretches, murdering each other for an ideot and a boy; the contest only which should wear a crown with diamonds, or wield a gewgaw sceptre! Strange infatuation! yet, such as it was, not less than forty thousand men were left dead upon the field, in asserting this dispute. Warwick gained a complete victory: Edward the IV. was established on the throne, and Margaret of Anjou was abandoned. She fled, for protection, to Scotland, with her son and husband, in order to attempt new designs for the recovery of her kingdom. Edward now took down the head of his father from the walls of York, and put up the

heads of the conquered generals in its stead. Each party, as it happened to be victorious, thus called in the executioner to complete the tragedy begun in the field; and our cruelty to each other, in civil discords, is what has impressed foreigners with an idea of English cruelty.

Though wretched as this reign was, yet the art of printing, which was introduced into it at that time seemed to make amends for a part of its calamities. William Caxton, a mercer was the first who practised the art at London; he translated some books himself from the French, and printed the translations of others. Among the writers of that time were Lord Rivers and earl Tiptoft, whose labours however, never ventured higher than translation. To judge of the learning of those times by the works of the laity in the vulgar tongue, we shall entertain the most despicable opinion of it; yet, when I read the Latin productions of some of the priests of that period, I cannot avoid allowing the authors no small share of erudition. The truth is, learning was separated from the purposes of common life at that time, but by no means unknown or neglected by the clergy, as we are taught to believe by men who seem very little acquainted with writers of that period.

LETTER XXIV.

WHICH ever side was victorious in these times of civil slaughter, it was always ready to confirm its injustice with the shew of authority. The parliament usually followed the conqueror, and fixed him upon the throne, when he had an army to back his pretensions. Edward was, immediately

upon his victory, confirmed by their unanimous approbation, while Henry and his queen were to seek for new resources in France and Scotland. No calamity was able to abate Margaret's perseverance: though so often overcome, yet she was once more resolved to enter England with five thousand men, granted her by the French king, bringing the unfortunate Henry with her to enforce her claims. Her usual ill fortune attended her: her little fleet was dispersed by a tempest, and she herself entered the Tweed with no small difficulty. Again, however, she offered her enemy battle, and was again defeated, near Hexham. The loss of this battle seemed to deprive her of every resource: she and her husband were now obliged to find safety in a separate flight, without attendants, and without even the necessaries of life. The weak, unfortunate monarch, almost always imprudent, and consequently unsuccessful, thought he could lie concealed in England; his error was soon attended with the obvious consequences; he was taken prisoner, carried to London with ignominy, and confined in the Tower.

Margaret was rather more fortunate; for she escaped, with the dukes of Somerset and Exeter, out of the kingdom, and retired to her father, who, though very poor, strove, as well as he could to supply her with the mere necessaries of life. You are not to suppose the miseries of the great, at those times, were fictitious, as we find them at present; they, in reality, endured every calamity that poverty now inflicts on the obscurest of wretches. Philip de Comines says, that he saw the duke of Exeter following the duke of Burgundy's equipage, barefoot, and serving for his livelihood as footman. This

was a strange situation for a lord, who had conducted armies, and was allied to kings and princes: but the times were barbarous; the princes on the coast of Negroland experience such reverses of fortune at this very day.

Edward, being now, by means of Warwick, fixed upon the throne, reigned in peace and security. A spirit of gallantry reigned in his court, mixed with cruelty, which seemed the distinguishing feature of those times of discord. In the very same palace which one day smoked with blood, a pageant or a mask appeared the day following; and the king would at once gallant a mistress and inspect an execution.

As his amours, however, were likely to dissatisfy his subjects, the earl of Warwick advised him to marry; and, with his consent, went over to France to procure him Bona of Savoy, and the match was accordingly, by his means concluded. But while the earl was hastening the negotiation in France, the king himself put an effectual stop to it at home, by marrying Elizabeth Woodville, with whom he had fallen in love, and whom he had vainly strove to debauch. Having thus given Warwick real cause of offence, he was resolved to widen the breach by driving him from the council. We are apt to hate the man we have offended, as much as the man who has offended us; Edward was no sooner established in security by Warwick, than he began to be ungrateful. Warwick, whose prudence was equal to his bravery, soon made use of both to assist his revenge; he seduced Clarence the king's brother, and to confirm him in his interests, made him his son-in-law; and now, finding his plot ready for execution, he flies into open rebellion. Vengeance seemed to be the only motive he had in view; plots,

truces, stratagems, and negotiations, followed each other in a rapid succession. But Warwick, long acquainted with intrigue and dissimulation, was at last, too subtle for the young king; inviting him, by a seeming promise of composition, to his house, he threw Edward off his guard; and Warwick, seizing the opportunity, made him a prisoner.

Nothing now appeared that could oppose Warwick's designs; he therefore disbanded his troops as unnecessary, and Edward was consigned to the custody of the Archbishop of York. But soon an accident happened that overthrew all Warwick's expectations: Edward's behaviour, in confinement, was so very obliging, that he got leave, upon some occasions, to hunt in a park adjoining to the place of his confinement; from thence he one day made his escape, by the assistance of a couple of his friends, and, contrary to all expectation, instantly repaired to York.

Fortune seemed to declare for Edward; wherefore marching some troops to London, the citizens immediately declared in his favour. It is surprising to think, how one party is seen this day at the head of numerous forces, while the next we behold it abandoned, and the adverse party triumphing without a rival; a strong proof of the fluctuating disposition of the English. Edward now commanded a numerous army, while Warwick, and his brother Clarence, were attended by a few. The king resolving to take the advantage of their weakness, after having defeated a party commanded by lord Wells, and cut off his head, the usual method of treating the prisoners of either party, he marched to give them battle. In this exigence they had no other course to take, but to embark, in order to screen themselves from impending danger. Having arrived

safely in France, they now were reconciled to queen Margaret, their former enemy : and, returning from France, Warwick once more saw himself at the head of no less than sixty thousand men.

It was now become Edward's turn to fly the kingdom, and escaping the danger of the enemy, of the sea, and of pirates, he landed safely in Holland. Warwick, in the mean time, advanced to London, and once more poor, passive Henry was released from prison, and placed upon an useless throne. Warwick was received, among the people, by the name of *king-maker* ; a parliament was called, and Henry's right confirmed.

Edward, though an exile in Holland, had many partizans at home ; and, after an absence of about nine months, once more landed at Ravenspur, where Henry IV. had landed upon a similar occasion. Though at first he was coldly received by the English, yet his army increased upon its march, and his moderation and feigned humility still added to the number of his partizans. London, at this time, ever ready to admit the most powerful, opened her gates, and Henry was again taken from his throne to be sent back to his old mansion.

Warwick at last found his party begin to decline, and Clarence, the king's brother, on whom he had the greatest dependence, changed to the other side. In this state of uncertainty, he knew no other expedient than to hazard a battle : he knew his forces to be inferior, but he was conscious of the superiority of his own generalship. With this resolution he marched from St. Albans, and having advanced to Barnet, within ten miles of London, he met Edward, who was marching down with a design to fight him. Warwick and Edward were the two

most renowned generals of their age, and now was to be struck the decisive blow, that was either to fix Edward on the throne, or to overthrow his pretensions for ever. The unfortunate Henry was dragged along to be a spectator of the engagement: happy in his natural imbecillity, which seemed to opiate all his afflictions.

The battle began early in the morning, and lasted till noon: never did two armies fight with greater obstinacy and bravery; not honour, but life, depended upon the issue of the contest. The example of Warwick inspired his troops with more than common resolution; and the victory, for a while, seemed to declare for him: but his army, by reason of a slight mist, happened to mistake a body of their own forces for that of the enemy, fell furiously upon them, and this fatal error turned the fortune of the day. Warwick did all that experience, conduct, or valour, could suggest, to retrieve the mistake, but in vain. Finding, therefore, all hopes gone, he was resolved to sell his life dearly to the conquerors; and rushing, on foot as he was, into the midst of his enemies, he fell covered all over with wounds. Thus died the ambitious Warwick, who had made and unmade kings at pleasure, yet who never seemed to aspire at regal dignity himself. Ten thousand of his army shared the same fate with him, the king having ordered that no quarter should be given.

Margaret, who was ever fruitful in resources, was, at this time, returning from France, with her son the prince of Wales, where she had been negotiating a new supply. She had scarce time to refresh herself from the fatigues of her voyage, when she received the fatal news of the death of the brave Warwick, who was then her only defender. 'Tho'

she had hitherto bravely withstood all the attacks of fortune, this was too violent a shock for nature to support: her grief now, for the first time, found way in a torrent of tears; and, yielding to her unhappy fate, she took sanctuary in an abbey in Hampshire.

She had not been here long, when she found some few friends still willing to assist her fallen hopes. The duke of Somerset, the earl of Pembroke, and one or two lords more, came to offer her their lives and fortunes: a dawn of hope was sufficient to raise her courage, and her numerous misfortunes gave way to the flattering prospect of another trial. She had now fought battles in almost every province in England. Tewkesbury-park was the last scene that terminated her attempts. The duke of Somerset headed her army: a man who had shared her dangers, and had ever been steady in her cause. He was valiant, generous, and polite, but rash and headstrong. When Edward first attacked him in his entrenchments, he repulsed him with such vigour, that [the enemy retired with precipitation; Somerset, supposing them routed, immediately pursued, and ordered Lord Wenlock to support him, while he charged; but this Lord disobeyed his injunctions, and the forces of Somerset were overpowered by numbers. Somerset, now, finding all gone, was unable to govern his rage: he had depended upon Wenlock; but when he beheld him inactive, in the very place where he had drawn up his men, giving way to his transport, with his heavy battle-ax in both hands, he ran upon the coward, and with one blow dashed
A. D. 1471.
out his brains.

After the battle, the queen, torpid with griefs,

was taken prisoner, and afterwards had the misery of finding her son, the prince of Wales, in the same condition. But this noble youth was not long in bondage : being brought into the victor's presence, he appeared before him with undaunted majesty. Edward, surprised at the boy's behaviour, asked him how he durst enter into his dominions without leave ? *I have entered into the dominions of my father,* replied the prince, *to revenge his injuries and to redress my own.* The barbarous monarch, enraged at his intrepidity, struck him on the mouth with his gauntlet : this seemed to be the signal for his death ; Gloucester, Clarence, and others, like wild beasts, rushing upon the unarmed youth at once, stabbed him to the heart with their daggers. When the governors of a kingdom behave thus, what must be the behaviour of the people ? To complete the tragedy, Henry himself, who had long been the passive spectator of all these cruelties, was now thought unfit to live. The duke of Gloucester, afterwards named Richard III. or the Crouch-back, entering his chamber alone, murdered him in cold blood. Of all those that were taken, none were suffered to survive but Margaret. It was, perhaps, expected that she would be ransomed by the king of France ; and in this they were not deceived. Lewis XI. paid the king of England fifty thousand crowns for her freedom. Thus Margaret of Anjou, having sustained the cause of her husband in twelve battles, after having survived her fortune and her children, died a few years after in privacy in France, very miserable indeed, but with no other claims to our pity, except her courage and distresses.

Of all people the English are the most compassionate : a throne raised upon cruelty never

wanted enemies among them and nothing could ever have been more ridiculous, than attempting to govern such subjects as the English by the hand of the executioner. The heads of either faction seemed to have been insensible of this truth, and it was their ill judged punishments which, by turns, plunged them into new distresses. A tyrant, however, when once drenched in blood, knows not when to give over. Edward being now freed from great enemies, turned to the punishment of those of lesser note; the gibbets were hung with his adversaries, and their estates confiscated to his use.

Yet, while he was thus rendering himself terrible on the one hand, he was immersed in gallantry on the other. Nature it seems, was not unfavourable to him in this respect, for he was universally allowed to be the most beautiful man of his time. The court seemed willing to countenance those debaucheries in which they had a share; and the clergy, as they themselves practised every species of lewdness with impunity, were ever ready to lend absolution to all his failings. The truth is, enormous vices had been of late so common, that adultery was held but a very slight offence: among the number of his mistresses was the wife of one Shore, a woman of exquisite beauty and good sense, but who had not virtue enough to withstand the temptations of a beautiful man and a monarch.

England now enjoying a temporary calm, the king thought the best way to ingratiate himself with the people was to assert his right to his domains in France, which the insurrections of his father had contributed to alienate in the former reign: this proposal was sure of pleasing the Eng-

lish, who ever appeared more fond of splendid than useful acquisitions. To prosecute this scheme, therefore, he sent off to his ally the duke of Burgundy, a reinforcement of three thousand men, and soon after passed over himself at the head of a numerous army. Lewis XI. then king of France, was with reason, alarmed at this formidable invasion: he found himself unable to resist so powerful an antagonist, and therefore had recourse to treaty. This succeeded better than arms. The two kings had an interview at the bridge of Perpignan, and, upon the payment of a stipulated sum, Edward led his forces back to England. The English king wanted to return home to his mistresses, to spend upon them the money he had gotten; and the French monarch hoped to be able to refuse those sums which he had only given a promise to pay.

Edward returned to renew his cruelty and his excesses. His brother Clarence, who had assisted him in gaining the crown, had been, for some time, treated with indifference and disrespect: this Clarence thought an ill recompence for his former services, and often gave himself the liberty of invective in the king's absence. In this posture of things, the king happened to kill a favourite deer belonging to Master Thomas Burdet, a friend of the duke: poor Burdet dropping some hasty expressions against the king, was sentenced to die, and executed in two days after. The duke of Clarence, upon the death of his friend, vented his grief in renewed reproaches against his brother: the king, unmindful of the ties of kindred, or the debt of gratitude by which he was bound, had him arraigned, condemned, and executed; he was smo-

thered in a butt of Malmsey wine. When men arrive at a certain station of greatness, their minds are dissipated on too great a number of objects to feel parental affection; the ties of nature are only strong with those who have but few friends or few dependents.

The rest of Edward's life was spent in riot and debauchery; in gratifications that are pleasing only to the narrow mind; in useless treaties, in which he was ever deceived; and in empty threats against the monarch who had deceived him. His parliament, now merely the minister of his will, consented to a war with France, at a time when it was impossible it could succeed: all the lords unanimously declared, that they thought it both just and necessary. The people seemed equally pleased at the prospect of a war, which might in some measure, alleviate their domestic calamities. Great preparations were made on every side; but Edward died in the midst of all his expectations. The character of this prince is easily summed up: his good qualities were courage and beauty: his bad qualities—every vice.

LETTER XXV.

HORRID as the last reign was, you must prepare for events in the next, still more heinous. Edward left two sons, the eldest of whom a boy between twelve and thirteen, was proclaimed king, by the name of Edward V. The queen, *A. D.* 1483. his mother, being herself newly raised among the nobility, seemed willing to hide the meanness of her former condition amongst a number of

new promotions ; this, as might naturally be expected, was displeasing to the old nobility ; and the duke of Gloucester, a monster both for the cruelty of his heart, and the deformity of his body, fomented their discontents. Having gained over Lord Hastings, the duke of Buckingham and some other lords, to his interests, he made them a long speech, tending to shew the danger that hung over their heads, if the queen should have the government in her hands : he enlarged upon the usurpations of her family, and the lengths they would be apt to run, upon being invested with the supreme power. In short, he spared neither dissimulation nor artifice, nor oaths, to get the guardianship of the minority, and the custody of the king's person.

His first step, after being declared protector of the kingdom, was to get the king's brother also, a boy of about seven, who, with the queen his mother, had taken sanctuary in Westminster-abbey. The queen foresaw the dangers which threatened her family ; and parting with her child, clasped him, with the last embrace, to her breast, and took leave of him with a shower of tears. The duke of Gloucester, on the other hand, took his nephew in his arms, and, clasping him with feigned affection, declared, that while he himself was alive, the child should never want a parent. The young king, finding that he was to have the pleasure of his brother's company, was greatly rejoiced, without considering the fatal intention of these preparations.

A few days after, the protector, upon a pretext of guarding them from danger, conveyed them both to the Tower.

Having thus secured their persons, the protector's

next step was to spread a report of their illegitimacy; and, by pretended obstacles, to put off the day of the young king's coronation. Lord Stanley, a man of deep penetration, was the first to disclose his fears of the protector's having ill designs: he communicated his suspicions to lord Hastings, who was firmly attached to the young king. Perhaps this Lord's wishes that such a project might not be true, influenced his judgement, and confirmed him in his security. Soon, however, Catesby, a vile creature of the protector's, was sent to sound him, and try whether he could be brought over to the side with the projected usurpation: Hastings appeared immoveable in his adherence to the king, and his death was therefore resolved on.

With this design, the protector next day called a council in the Tower, under the pretence of expediting the coronation. He came thither himself at nine o'clock in the morning, with a chearful countenance, saluting the members with the utmost affability, and with demonstrations of unusual good humour; then going out for a short time, he desired his absence might not interrupt the debates. In about an hour he returned again, quite altered, knitting his brows, biting his lips, and shewing by frequent alterations in his looks, some inward perturbation. A silence ensued for some time, and the lords looked upon each other, not without reason, expecting some dreadful catastrophe. At length he broke the dreadful silence. *My Lords*, he said, *what punishment do they deserve who have conspired against my life?* This redoubled the astonishment of the assembly, and the silence continuing, lord Hastings at length made answer, That whoever did so, deserved to be punished as a traitor: upon which the protector, with a stern countenance,

baring his withered arm, cried out, *See what the sorceress my queen-sister, and that wretch, Shore's Wife, have done by their witchcrafts! Their spells have reduced my arm to this condition, and my whole body would have suffered the same calamity, but for a timely detection.* The amazement of the council seemed to increase at this terrible accusation, and lord Hastings again said, *If they have committed such a crime they deserve punishment.* *If!* cried the protector, with a loud voice; *Dost thou answer me with Ifs? I tell thee, that they have conspired my death, and that thou, traitor, art an accomplice in their crime.* Thus, having said, he struck the table twice with his hand, and the room was instantly filled with armed men. *I arrest thee,* continues he, turning to Hastings, *for high treason!* and, at the same time, delivered him to the custody of the soldiers.

The council-room was now filled with tumult; and, though no rescue was offered, yet the soldiers caused a bustle, as if they apprehended danger. One of them narrowly missed cleaving lord Stanley's head with a battle-ax, but he escaped by shrinking under the table. In all probability, the fellow had orders for the attempt; so that, when Stanley should be thus killed, his death might be ascribed to the tumult caused by an intended rescue. However, escaping the blow, he was arrested by the protector's order, who was well apprized of his attachment to the young king. As for lord Hastings, he was forced to make a short confession to the next priest that was at hand; the protector crying out, by St. Paul, that he would not dine till he had seen his head taken off. He was accordingly hurried out to the little green before the Tower chapel, and beheaded on a log of wood that accidentally lay there.

IN A SERIES OF LETTERS.

But not those alone of his council were thus barbarously treated: on the very same day a similar tragedy was acted at Pontefract castle, where the earl Rivers, the most polite and gallant man of the age in which he lived, and lord Grey were both beheaded by a decree of that very same council, the members of which were now in such danger themselves. A plot against the king was the pretext for their execution; but, in reality, they died as being the only obstacles to prevent his destruction.

The protector, having thus got rid of those he most feared, undertook to punish even the least dangerous; Jane Shore the late king's mistress, was an enemy too humble for him to fear any thing from her attempts, yet, as she had been accused of witchcraft, of which all the world saw she was innocent, he thought proper to punish her for faults of which she was really guilty. This unhappy woman had been deluded formerly from her husband, one Shore, a goldsmith, in Lombard street, and continued with Edward the most guiltless mistress in his luxurious and abandoned court: she ever interceded for the distressed, and was ever applied to as a mediator for mercy. She was charitable, generous, and pleasing in conversation; her wit and her beauty were said to be irresistible. Being blameless in other respects, the protector ordered her to be sued for incontinency, for having left her husband to live in adultery with another. It is possible, that the people were not displeased at seeing again reduced to her former meanness, a person who had for a while been raised above them, and enjoyed all the favours of the king. Her guilt was too notorious to be denied; she acknowledged the charge, and was condemned to walk barefoot through the city, and to do penance in St. Paul's church in a

white sheet, with a wax taper in her hand, before thousands of spectators. She lived above forty years after this sentence, reduced to the most extreme wretchedness. An historian in the reign of Henry VII. assures us that he saw her gathering herbs in a field near the city, to supply her nightly meal; a strange employment for one who once had been the favourite of a court, and the mistress of a king.

The protector now began to lay aside his pretended regard for the sons of the late king, and to aspire to the throne more openly. To effect this, the duke of Buckingham, who by promises and bribes was devoted to his interests, tried every art to infuse into the people an opinion of the bastardy of the late king, and that of his children. Dr. Shaw, a popular preacher, was hired to harangue the people from St. Paul's cross to the same purpose. The preacher, after having displayed the incontinence of the queen, insisted upon the illegality of the young king's title, and the virtues of the protector. *It is he, continued the sycophant, who carries in his face, in his soul, the image of virtue, and the marks of a true descent.* Still, however, the people continued silent, each fearing to begin the cry of King Richard, or detesting the tendency of his sermon. The duke of Buckingham, therefore, next undertook to persuade them in his turn. His speech turned upon the calamities of the last reign, and the bastardy of the present pretender. He seemed apprehensive, indeed, that the protector could not be prevailed upon to accept the crown, but he hoped that the people would take every method to persuade him. He concluded by desiring every man to speak his real sentiments, and to give a positive answer, whether they would have the

young bastard or the virtuous protector ? A silence for some time ensued ; but, at length, some of the duke's own servants, who had slipped in among the press, cried out, long live king Richard ! This cry was seconded by some of the citizens who were previously bribed ; and the mob at the door, a despicable class of people, ever pleased with novelty, repeated the cry, and throwing up their caps, cried out, A Richard ! A Richard ! The duke, now taking the advantage of this faint approbation, next day at the head of the mayor and aldermen, went to wait upon the protector with offers of the crown. Richard, with his usual hypocrisy, appeared to the crowd in the gallery, between two bishops, and, at first, pretended to be surprized at the concourse. When he was informed that their business was to offer him the crown, he declined accepting it, alledging his love for the late king his brother, and his affection for the children under his care. Buckingham, seemed displeased with this answer, muttered some words to himself, and at length, plainly told him, that all the people had determined upon making him king ; that they had now proceeded too far to recede, and therefore were resolved, in case of his refusal, to offer it where it should meet with a more ready acceptance. This was a resolution which the protector's tenderness for his people could not permit him to see executed. *I see*, cried, he, in a modest tone, *I see the kingdom is resolved to load me with preferments, unequal to my abilities or my choice ; yet since it is my duty to obey the dictates of a free people, I will graciously accept their petition. I, therefore from this moment, enter upon the government of England and France, with a resolution to defend the one and to subdue the other.* The crowd being thus dismissed, each returned

A. D. 1483. home, pondering upon the proceedings of the day, and making such remarks, as passion, interest, or prudence might suggest.

One crime ever draws on others : for usurpation naturally requires security ; as soon, therefore, as he was fixed upon the throne, Richard sent the governor of the Tower orders to put the two young princes to death. There was yet one man left in the kingdom who had virtue enough to refuse being made the instrument of a tyrant's cruelty : the governor of the tower, whose name was Blackenbury, submissively answered, that he would not imbrue his hands in their blood. A fit instrument, however, was not long wanting : one James Tyrell, was employed, and sent to command the tower for one night. Tyrell, that very night, whilst all were asleep, went to the chamber where the two young princes lay : here the murderer, for some time, hesitated in his base design, struck, as it is said, with the innocence of their looks ; but, habit getting the better of remorse, he at last smothered them between two pillows, and caused them to be buried under a little stair-case, near where they lay. Vengeance, though late, followed this execrable wretch : he was executed for this fact in the succeeding reign, confessing his crime, and the manner of its execution.

The warlike spirit first excited by the conquest of France, and then kept up by the long civil war, seemed to have banished every sentiment of virtue from the kingdom : cruelty and executions were grown so common, that the people now became familiar with blood and death : scarce a noble family in the kingdom which was not thinned by these terrible dissensions. The clergy seemed, at

this time, quite separated from the laity; they seldom suffered for treason, and were but little conversant in the bloody politics of the times. As for arts, sciences, and commerce, they were totally neglected. In all this carnage and desolation, one power, was imperceptibly gaining ground; as the lords were declining, the commons were coming into authority: not so much exposed as the former to the tempests of regal resentment, they continued to increase in wealth and favour, and found safety in their humble station.

LETTER XXVI.

THERE is somewhat that peculiarly strikes the imagination in the transactions of this and the preceding reign; I have therefore treated them with more than usual prolixity. Our tragic poets seem to have been sensible how much these strange instances of depravation were susceptible of a poetic dress. Every picture of the times is marked with strong lines, like an African prospect, where all is vast, wild, and terrible.

Richard had, at length, waded though every obstacle to the throne, and now began, after the usual manner of all usurpers, to strengthen, by his ill-got power, his foreign alliances. Sensible also of the influence of pageantry and shew upon the minds of the people, he caused himself to be crowned first at London, and then at York. The clergy he endeavoured to secure in his interests, by great indulgences to them, and by his own hypocritical behaviour.

But, while he endeavoured to establish his power, he found it undermining on a side from whence he

least expected it : the duke of Buckingham, who had been the principal instrument in placing him upon the throne, now began to expect the reward of his adherence. Richard, indeed, had given him several posts and governments, but denied him a moiety of the confiscated lands of Hereford, to which he had some family claims. Very great obligations between two friends, on either side, generally end in disgust : Buckingham supposed that his services could never be over-rewarded ; while Richard, on the contrary, was willing to curb his desires, which seemed to increase by gratification. Soon, therefore, the duke was disgusted with the new monarch, and as soon conceived a scheme for depriving him of the crown ; doubtful for a while, whether he should put in for the crown himself, or set up another. The latter opinion prevailed, and he was resolved to declare for Henry, earl of Richmond, then an exile in Bretagne. Henry, of Richmond, was one of those who had the good fortune to survive the numerous massacres of the preceding reigns : he was the only remaining branch of the house of Lancaster ; he was descended from John of Gaunt, but by the female line ; his right to the throne was very doubtful, but the crimes of the usurper strengthened his claims. He had long lived in exile, and was once delivered up to the ambassadors of Edward the IV. and was just upon the point of being brought back to England, to suffer a cruel death ; when the prince, who had delivered him up, repented what he had done, and took him from the ambassadors just as he was brought on ship-board. This was the youth whom the duke of Buckingham pitched upon to dethrone the tyrant, and a negotiation was commenced between them for that purpose.

Richard, in the mean time, either informed by his creatures, or made distrustful by conscious guilt, suspected a conspiracy, and could not avoid thinking Buckingham among the number of the conspirators. Impressed with these suspicions, he came to a resolution of sending for him to court, and the duke's refusing to come confirmed him in his belief; but he had soon a plain conviction of his treachery, for word was brought that the duke of Buckingham was up in arms. The duke, having found that he could dissemble with Richard no longer, had drawn together some Welsh forces, and began to march to the western shore, where he had appointed young Richmond to land: Richard, however, no way dismayed at the approaching danger, prepared to meet him with the few forces he had then in readiness. However, fortune seemed to favour the usurper, and rendered his preparations for this time needless. As Buckingham was advancing, by hasty marches, towards Gloucester, where he designed to pass the Severn, just then the river was swollen to such a degree, that the country on both sides, was deluged, and even the tops of mountains covered with water. It held ten days, during which the Welsh army could neither pass the river nor subsist on the other side, where they found nothing but desolation: at length, compelled by hunger, after having suffered a thousand hardships, they all dispersed, and returned home, notwithstanding the duke's intreaties to the contrary. In this helpless situation, the duke, after a moment's reflection, thought the properest place of safety he could fix upon was at the house of one Bannister, who had been his servant, and who had received repeated obligations from his family. No maxim was ever more just, than that there is no friendship

among the wicked: Buckingham had himself been first false to his king, and after to Richard, the creature of his own power; how then could he expect fidelity from others? A large reward was set upon the duke's head: the villain Bannister, unable to resist so great a temptation, went and betrayed his master to the sheriff of Shropshire, who, surrounded the house with armed men, seized the duke in a peasant's dress, and conducted him to Shrewsbury, where, he was beheaded, without the form of a trial or delay.

In the mean time, Richmond landed in England, but, finding his hopes frustrated by the catastrophe of Buckingham, he hastily set sail again, and returned to Bretagne. Richard thus freed from the impending danger, gave a loose to cruelty, the favourite passion of his breast. In order to expedite his revènge, he gave one Ashton an unbounded commission to condemn and execute, upon the spot, such as were deemed by him guilty, or even suspected of guilt. A cruel king never wants a bloody minister: Ashton executed his commission with the utmost rigour, putting husbands to death in presence of their own wives, and children before the eyes of their parents. It is said, that this execrable wretch, being solicited by a beautiful woman to release her husband, who was a prisoner upon suspicion, he consented, upon her promising to grant him a favour of another nature: scarce had the poor creature indulged his brutal desire, when he brought her out, and pointed to her husband, whom, in the mean time, he had given orders should be hanged upon a neighbouring tree!

Still however the authority of a parliament was wanting to give sanction to the injustice of Richard's

proceedings ; but, in these times of vice and servility, that was soon procured. The parliament approved his proceedings confirmed the act of illegitimacy of Edward's children, passed an act of attainder against the earl of Richmond, and all his adherents ; and seemed, upon the whole, more disposed to slavery, than he to be a tyrant. One thing more was yet wanting to complete his security, the death of his rival ; to effect this he sent ambassadors to the duke of Bretagne, with whom Richmond had taken shelter, seemingly upon business of a public nature, but in reality, to treat with Laudais, that prince's prime minister, and to induce him to deliver up Richmond. The minister was base enough to enter into the negotiation : but Richmond, having had timely notice fled away into France, and had just reached the limits of that kingdom, when his pursuers came up with him.

Richard, finding his design of seizing his enemy's person without success, as his power became more precarious, became every day more suspicious and more cruel. Lord Stanley, who was now married to the widow of Edward IV. fell strongly under his suspicion : and, to secure his fidelity, he took the son as an hostage for his father's good behaviour. He now also resolved to get rid of his present queen, in order to marry his own niece ; a match from which he expected to derive several advantages. The lady he was then married to was formerly wife of the young prince of Wales, that was murdered by him at Tewksbury. It is no slight indication of the barbarity of the times, to find a woman thus taking the murderer of her husband for her second lord. She felt, however, the consequences of her ingratitude to the deceased prince, in the inhumanity of

the present: Richard treated her with so much contempt and indifference, that she died of grief, according to his desire. But his wishes were not crowned with success in his applications to his niece; she treated his vile passion which retaliated contempt and just detestation.

In the perplexity caused by this unexpected refusal, it was that he received the news of Richmond being once more landed at Milford-haven, with an intent to deprive him of the crown; but being informed that he brought with him but two thousand men, he seemed to despise the effort, and issued orders to oppose him with the greatest coolness and intrepidity. Richard was possessed of courage and military conduct, and these were his only virtues. Having heard that Richmond was marching with his little army to London, he was resolved to meet him on the way, and end the pretensions of the one or the other, by a battle. Richmond, though very much inferior in number, was no less desirous of engaging; so that the two armies soon met at Bosworth field, to determine a dispute that had now, for more than thirty years, drained England of its bravest subjects.

Richard perceiving his enemy advance, drew up his army, consisting of about thirteen thousand men, in order of battle: he gave the command of the van-guard to the duke of Norfolk, and led the main body himself, with the crown on his head, either designing by this to inspire the enemy with awe, or to render himself conspicuous to his own army. The earl of Richmond, who had not half the number of men, drew up his forces also in two lines, the

earl of Oxford commanding the first, and he himself the second : lord Stanley, in the mean time, posted himself on one flank between the two armies, and his brother took station in the other, which was opposite. Richard, seeing him thus in a situation equally convenient for joining either army, immediately sent him orders to join him, which the other refusing, he gave instant command for beheading lord Stanley's son, whom he had kept as an hostage ; but being persuaded to postpone the execution till after the fight, he complied, and immediately ordered the trumpets to sound to battle. The two armies approaching each other, the battle began with a shower of arrows, and soon the two ranks began to close : This was what Stanley expected, who immediately profited himself of the occasion, joined the line of Richmond, and turned the fortune of the day. In the mean while, Richard spurred up his horse into the thickest of the fight, and Richmond quitted his station behind, to encourage his troops by his presence in the front. Richard, perceiving him, was willing to end all by one blow ; and, with the fury of a lion flew thro' thousands to attack him. He slew Sir William Brandon, the earl's standard-bearer, who had attempted stopping his career ; Sir John Cheney, having taken Brandon's place, was thrown to the ground : Richmond, in the mean time, stood to oppose him, but the crowd interposing, they were separated. Richard now, therefore, went to inspire his troops at another quarter ; but, at last, perceiving his army every where yielding or flying, and now finding that all was gone, he rushed, with a loud shout, into the midst of the enemy, and there met a better death than his actions had merited. After the battle his body being found amidst a heap

of slaughter, stripped naked, covered over with wounds, and the eyes frightfully staring, it was thrown across an horse, the head hanging down on one side and the legs on the other, and so carried to Leicester. It lay there two days, exposed to public view, and then was buried without farther ceremony.

Richard's crown being found, by one of the soldiers, in the field of battle, was immediately placed upon the head of the conqueror: the whole army as if inspired, with one voice, crying out, Long live king Henry! Thus ended the bloody reign of Richard; and by his death, the race of the Plantagenet kings, that had been in possession of the crown during the space of three hundred and thirty years, became extinct. Thus ended also the contests between the houses of York and Lancaster, which had for thirty years, been as a pestilence to the kingdom, and in which above an hundred thousand men lost their lives, either by the executioner, or on the field of battle.

These dissensions had reduced the kingdom to a state of almost savage barbarity: laws, arts, and commerce, were entirely neglected for the practice of arms; and to be a conqueror was sufficient, in the eyes of the people, to stand for every other virtue. They had, as yet, no idea of pacific government, nor could lend applause to those who cultivated it, and except only in their gallantry to the fair sex, they little differed from the ancient painted inhabitants of the island. In these wars the women, though ever so formidable, or ever so active, unless accused of witchcraft, were exempted from capital punishments, which probably

proceeded from a spirit of gallantry, the single virtue of the times. As for the clergy, they were entirely distinct from the laity, both in customs, constitutions, and learning : they were governed by the civil law, drawn up by one of the Roman Emperors ; whereas the laity were governed by the common law, which was traditionally delivered to them from their ancestors. The clergy (however we may be told to the contrary) understood and wrote Latin tolerably well ; the laity, on the other hand, understood no Latin, but applied themselves wholly to French, when they aspired to the character of politeness. The clergy, as a body, little interested themselves in the civil polity, and perhaps were not displeased to see the laity, whom they considered not as fellow-subjects, but rivals for power, weakening themselves by continual contests : the laity regarded the clergy with blind veneration, and this veneration lessened their regard for their king. In short, as there was no virtue among the individuals of the nation, the government was like a feverish constitution, ever subject to ferment and disorder. France served for a while, as a drain to the peccant humours ; but, when that was no longer open, the disorder seemed to increase in the internal part of the constitution, and produced all the horrors of civil war.

LETTER. XXVII

IT was in this state of the nation that the earl of Richmond, who took the name of Henry VII. came to the throne. You are now to behold one of the greatest revolutions that ever was brought about in any kingdom, effected by the prudence, clemency, and perseverance of one great prince : a nation of tumult reduced to civil subordination ; an insolent and factious aristocracy humbled ; wise laws enacted ; commerce restored ; and the peaceful arts rendered amiable to a people, for whom before, war only had charms. In a word, you are now to turn to a period where the whole government seems to put on a new form ; and to view the actions of a king, if not the greatest, at least the most useful, that ever sat upon the British or any other throne. Hitherto you have only read the history of a barbarous nation, obeying with reluctance, and governed by caprice : you are henceforth to view more refined politics, and better concerted schemes ; to behold human wisdom, as if roused from her lethargy of thirteen hundred years, exerting every art to reduce the natural ferocity of the people, and to introduce happiness.

Henry's first care upon coming to the throne was to marry the princess Elizabeth, daughter of Edward IV. and thus unite the interests of the houses of Lancaster and York : but, lest the people should suppose he claimed the crown upon the strength of this alliance, he deferred her coronation till two years after, by which he made evident the priority of his own claim. His reign happily commenced with an obedience to the laws that

had been hitherto unknown in England. An act had been passed, in the preceding reign, for the attainder of his friends and followers : this act still continued in force, and many members of that house, by which it was to be repealed, were those who were mentioned in the attainder. To suffer such to join in repealing that statute, would be admitting them judges in their own cause, to which Henry bravely and justly objected ; they were, therefore, obliged to leave the house, till an act was passed to reverse their attainder.

Before his reign, it was usual, when any person was attainted, to take away his life, and give away his fortune to some court favourite : Henry wisely perceived that this had two bad effects : it first excited resentment by its cruelty, and, in the next place, only made the favourite too powerful for subjection. This prudent monarch took a better method to repress tumult and rebellion : he deprived such as were caught in arms of their estate and fortunes, and these he reserved for the use of the crown. By this means he deprived them of the power to injure him, and he strengthened the sinews of government by enriching the crown. A great part of the miseries of his predecessors proceeded from their poverty, and the opulence of the nobility. Henry saw that money alone could turn the scale of power into his own hands, and therefore hoarded up all the confiscations of his enemies with the utmost frugality. Avarice, upon these motives, is not only excusable, but praise worthy : it is not meanness, but œconomy : and, whatever historians tell us of liberality in a king, it is, at best, a misplaced virtue. Such liberalities are, in general, extorted from the poor, the industrious, and the

useful ; and bestowed, as rewards, upon the rich, and powerful, and insinuating ; upon the sycophants of a court, and flatterers of debauchery. Henry was different from his predecessors in this respect ; he gave away few rewards to the courtiers about his person, and none but the poor shared his benefactions. He released all the prisoners for debt in his dominions, whose debts did not amount to forty shillings, and paid their creditors from the royal coffers. His œconomy rendered him not only useful to the poor, but enabled him to be just to his own creditors, either abroad or at home. Those sums which he borrowed from the city of London, or any of his subjects, he repaid at the appointed day, with the utmost punctuality ; and thus, as he grew just in his own dominions, he became respectable abroad.

Immediately after his marriage with Elizabeth, he issued out a general pardon to all such as chose to accept it : but those lords, who had been the favourites of the last reign, and long used to turbulence, refused his proffered tenderness, and flew to arms. Lord Lovel, Humphrey and Thomas Stafford, placed themselves at the head of this insurrection : Henry sent the duke of Bedford to oppose the insurgents, with orders to try what might be the effects of a proffered pardon, previous to his attempts to reduce them. The duke punctually obeyed his instructions, but the rebels seemed to listen to no accomodation : but, contrary to all expectation, Lord Lovel, apprehensive of being deserted by his followers, first shewed them the example and fled away to Flanders. The rebel army, now without a leader, submitted to the mercy of the king, which they received. The Staffords,

who were in the mean time besieging Worcester, hearing of the surrender of their confederates, attempted to take sanctuary in a church which had no privileges to protect them: being taken from thence, the eldest of the brothers was executed, the other received a pardon.

But the people were become so turbulent and factious, by a long course of civil war, that no governor could rule them, nor any king please. One rebellion seemed extinguished only to give rise to another; the king kept, at that time, a son of the duke of Clarence, who had been formerly drowned in a butt of wine, as has been mentioned, a prisoner in the Tower. This poor youth, who was styled the earl of Warwick, had long been a stranger to liberty; he was unacquainted with men and things, and so little conversant with common life from his long and early confinement, that he knew not the difference, to use the words of the historians, between a duck and an hen. This unhappy boy, harmless as he was, was made an instrument to deceive the people. A priest of Oxford had trained up one Lambert Simnel, a baker's son, to counterfeit the person of this earl; and instructed him to talk upon some facts and occurrences relative to the court of king Edward. Thus, having prepared him for his purpose, he set out for Ireland, judging that the properest theatre to open the scene. The plot unfolded to his wish: Simnel was received and proclaimed king of Ireland; and he was conducted, by the people and judges, with great pomp to the castle, where he was treated conformably to his pretended birth and distinction.

The king could not avoid being troubled at this imposture, because he saw his mother-in-law at the

bottom of it : he was resolved, therefore, to take the advice of his council upon this occasion, who, after due deliberation, determined upon confining the old queen to a monastery ; but, to wipe off the aspersions of treason from one to whom he was so nearly allied, he gave out that she was thus punished for having formerly delivered up the princess, her daughter, to king Richard. The people, as usual, murmured upon this occasion ; but the king, unmindful, of their idle clamours, persisted in his resolution, and she remained in confinement till she died, which did not happen till several years after. The next resolution of the king's council was to shew the earl of Warwick, who was still confined in the Tower, publickly to the people : in consequence of this he was led through the principal streets of London, and conducted in a solemn procession to St. Paul's, where great numbers were assembled to see him. Still, however, they proceeded at Dublin to honour their pretended monarch, and he was crowned, with great solemnity, in presence of the earl of Kildare, the Chancellor, and other officers of state. Such impositions upon the people were very frequent, at that time, in several parts of Europe : Lorrain, Naples, and Portugal, had their impostors, who continued for a long time to deceive without detection. In fact, the inhabitants of every country were so much confined to the limits of their own peculiar place of abode, and knew so little of what was passing in the rest of the world around them, that nothing was more easy than to deceive. King Simnel, being now joined by Lord Lovel, and one or two lords more of the discontented party, resolved to pass over into England, and accordingly landed in Lancashire ;

from thence he marched to York, expecting the country would rise and join him as he passed along. But in this he was deceived; and he soon had the mortification to find, that the king himself was coming up with a superior force to give him battle. The event of the contest was such as might have been expected; the earl of Lincoln, who commanded for Simnel, was overthrown and slain in battle, and the impostor himself taken prisoner. Henry had now an opportunity of shewing the humanity and the greatness of his mind: Simnel was pardoned, and given a mean employment in the king's kitchen, and afterwards preferred to be one of his falconers, in which post he died. As for the priest, his instructor, he was made a prisoner for life.

Things being thus adjusted, we may turn to France, which had long been the grave of the English, who yet coveted nothing so much as to continue the war there. Henry had all along perceived the futility of conquests upon the continent, conquests that could produce no other advantage than military glory: but, while he internally despised such pernicious triumphs, he was obliged, in order to gain popularity, to countenance them. He therefore often pretended, that he was going to ravish his kingdom once more from the usurper, and to lay all France in blood; but, in fact, he had nothing farther from his heart. As far as negotiations and threats went, he did all that lay in his power to keep the jarring states of that kingdom nearly balanced, and consequently feeble; but, as for succours of men and money, he too well knew the value of both to exhaust them, in the manner of his predecessors, upon such vain projects.

The parliament, however, was taught to believe, that he intended something considerable against France ; and they, ever chearful when France was to be opposed, furnished him with the necessary supplies. But money was, at that time, more easily granted than levied in England. A new insurrection arose when the supplies came to be collected, and the earl of Northumberland was killed by the mob of Yorkshire, while he attempted to enforce obedience to the laws. The mutineers did not stop there ; by the advice of one John-a-Chamber, an incendiary, they set Sir John Egremont at their head and marched towards London to give the king battle : the consequence of this rash step was the defeat of therebels, and the death of John a-Chamber, their ringleader. It was necessary to treat this man with rigour, to induce a more ready compliance to the future grants of parliament, and prevent all insurrections on the same occasion ; for now people seemed continually more willing to revolt, than to pay their taxes.

One would not have imagined, by the success of Simnel's imposture, that it could have produced imitations ; but the old dutchess of Burgundy, sister to Edward IV. finding the former fraud had deceived so many, was resolved to project a new scheme, with more art and greater plausibility. She first spread a report, that the young duke of York, said to have been murdered in the Tower, was still alive ; and soon a youth made his appearance that took upon him the title of the duke of York. The person pitched upon to play this part was called Perkin Warbeck, the son of a Flemish Jew, a youth of a beautiful person, good understanding, and possessing something in his carriage and manner far above his birth or circumstances. The

king of France, ever attentive to sow the seeds of division in England, received him at his court, and gave him proper encouragement; but, at the intercession of Henry, dismissed him upon the prospect of a peace. Having quitted France, Perkin went to seek protection from the dutchess of Burgundy, taking the greatest care to conceal his former acquaintance. At their first meeting, the dutchess pretended much displeasure at his assurance, in assuming the title of her nephew; but soon after, as if brought over by conviction, she owned him for the duke of York, and gave him a guard suitable to that dignity. The English, ever ready to revolt, gave credit to this new imposture, and the young man's prudence, conversation, and deportment, served, to confirm what their credulity had begun. All such as were disgusted with the king prepared to join him; but particularly those that were formerly Henry's favourites, and had contributed to place him on the throne, thinking their services could never be sufficiently repaid, were now the chief heads of the conspiracy. These were joined by numbers, some greedy of novelty, some blindly attached to their leaders, and some induced, by their desperate fortunes, to wish for a change.

Whilst the king's enemies were thus combining to involve the kingdom in its former calamities, he himself was no less intent upon preventing the impending danger. He endeavoured to undeceive the people, first by shewing that the duke of York was really dead, and by punishing his murderers; and next by tracing Perkin, the impostor, to his primitive meanness. The last of these projects was not easily executed; for Warbeck's parents and place of abode were so well concealed, that it was

almost impossible to come to a knowledge of them. But Henry, at length, won over Sir Robert Clifford, who was then accompanying the impostor in Flanders, and had been entrusted with his and the dutchess's secrets. From Clifford the king learned, not only their designs, but the names of the conspirators, and had several of them arrested. His former lenity, however did not exempt him from fresh ingratitude; he found that the lord high chamberlain, brother to the famous lord Stanley, who had been lately created earl of Derby, was among the number of those who now had conspired against him. Though this nobelman had been loaded with favours, and was even then possessed of an immense fortune, yet, still dissatisfied, he sought more from his country's calamities. He was therefore arrested by the king's order, and, confessing his crime, was sentenced to suffer that death he so justly merited. You have hitherto observed how difficult it was to rule the English at this time; each province seemed desirous of placing some particular family upon the throne, and more eagerly took up arms, than willingly disposed themselves to legal subordination. To mix lenity with justice, upon proper occasions, required a very nice discernment: Henry shewed his judgment in this particular. Whenever a conspirator took up arms against him, from a conscientious adherence to principle, and from a love of the house of York, he generally found pardon; but if the only motive of his conspiring was a love of change or an illicit desire to subvert those laws by which he was governed, he was then treated with more severity.

While Warbeck's adherents were thus disappointed in England, he himself attempted landing

in Kent, but, being beat off from that coast by the inhabitants, he went from thence to Ireland: finding his hopes frustrated there also, he went next to try his success in Scotland. Here his fortune began to mend; James III. who was then king of that country, received him very favourably, acknowledged his pretensions to be just, and soon after gave him in marriage, a daughter of the earl of Huntly, one of the most beautiful and accomplished ladies of her time. But, not content with these instances of favour, he was resolved to attempt setting him upon the throne of England. It was expected, that, upon Perkin's first appearance in that kingdom, all the friends of the house of York would rise in his favour: upon this ground, therefore, the king of Scotland entered the country with a strong army, and proclaimed the young adventurer wherever he went; but, contrary to expectations, he found none to second his claims: and, thus disappointed, he again retreated back to Endinburgh, where he continued to reside, till, upon the conclusion of a treaty of peace between the two kingdoms, he was once more obliged to leave Scotland, and to seek for a new protector.

Perkin, had now, for the space of five years, continued to alarm the king; he had been acknowledged in France, Flanders, Ireland, and Scotland, as lawful heir to the British crown, and had made some bold attempts to second his pretensions. The time, at length, came, that he was to act the same character in England, which he had performed elsewhere with so much success. Some months before this there had been an insurrection in Cornwall: the inhabitants of that distant country, upon levying the taxes granted by parliament,

refused to contribute to expences which were destined for the defence of an opposite part of the kingdom. Every insurrection now was followed with a project of dethroning the king; they therefore marched, with one Flammock, a lawyer, Bodely, a carrier, and lord Audley, at their head, directly to London, and encamped upon Blackheath. There the king's forces surrounded and attacked them: the battle was bloody; two thousand of these poor deluded wretches were killed upon the spot, and the rest forced to surrender at discretion. Lord Audley, and one or two of their ringleaders, were executed; but the rest, to the number of four thousand, were dismissed home again in safety. But this moderation had not the proper effect upon minds too ignorant for gratitude; they attributed the king's clemency to fear, and upon returning home, induced their friends to believe that the whole kingdom was ready to rise to vindicate their quarrel. It was now, therefore, determined to send for Perkin Warbeck, who was then in Ireland, to put himself at their head. Perkin did not hesitate to accept their invitation; and, taking upon him the command, chose for his privy council one Hern, a broken mercer, Shelton, a taylor, and Astley, a scrivener. He published a proclamation also against Henry, in which he took the title of Richard IV. and, having drawn together a body of three thousand men, attempted to storm the city of Exeter, but without success.

Henry, having received advice of his proceedings, said merrily, that he should now have the pleasure of visiting a person whom he had long wished to see, and then took the necessary measures to oppose him. Perkin, on the other hand,

seeing that the king was marching to attack him, lost all courage, and, in the night, took sanctuary in the monastery of Bewley. Soon after, upon promise of a pardon, he surrendered himself to the king, and was confined in the Tower; but, escaping from thence, and finding it impracticable to get out of the kingdom, he again took sanctuary in the monastery of Bethlem. The prior of this house gave him up to the king, upon promise of a pardon; and Perkin was now a second time confined in the Tower: but plotting even there, against the king, he and the earl of Warwick, being convicted of designs to kill the keeper of the Tower, and so escape, were *A. D.* 1499. both put to death.

There was as yet in Henry's reign, nothing but plots, treasons, insurrections, ingratitude, imposture, and punishments. You have seen several of these fomenters of treason brought to justice, yet infinitely greater numbers pardoned; but there was a wide difference between the punishments of this, and the arbitrary sentences of the reigns preceding. The courts of judicature now sat upon every criminal, uninfluenced by the royal authority; and scarce one person was punished for treason, but such as would, at present, have received the same rigorous treatment. A king who can reign without ever punishing, is happy; but that monarch must certainly be undone, who, through fear, or ill-timed lenity, suffers repeated guilt to escape without notice. When a country becomes quite illicit, punishments then, like the loppings in a garden, only serve to strengthen the stock, and prepare for a new harvest of virtues.

LETTER XXVIII.

LET us now exhibit that part of Henry's reign in which he most deserves our admiration, in which we shall find him as the friend of peace, and the refined politician. Indeed, no man loved peace more than he, and much of the ill-will of his subjects arose from his attempts to repress their inclination for war. The usual preface to his treaties was, That, when Christ came into the world, peace was sung; and, when he went out of the world, peace was bequeathed. He had no ambition to extend his power, except only by treaties, and by wisdom; by these he rendered himself much more formidable to his neighbours, than his predecessors had done by their victories. They were formidable only to their own subjects; Henry was dreaded by rival kings.

He all along had two points principally in view; one to depress the nobility and clergy, and the other to humanize and raise up the populace.—From the ambition of the former, and the blind dependence of the latter, all the troubles in former reigns arose; every nobleman was possessed of a certain number of subjects, over whom he had an absolute power, and, upon every occasion, could influence numbers to join in revolt and disobedience.

He first, therefore, considered that giving these petty monarchs a power of selling their estates, which before they had not a right to do, would greatly weaken their interest. With this view

he got an act passed, in which the nobility were granted a power of alienating their possessions ; a law infinitely pleasing to the commons, nor was it disagreeable even to the nobility, since they thus had an immediate resource for supplying the waste of prodigality, and the demands of their creditors. The blow reached their posterity alone, but they were too ignorant to be sensible of remote sufferings.

His next scheme was to prevent their giving liveries to many hundreds of dependents, who served like standing forces, to be ready at the summons of their lord. By an act passed in his reign, none but menial servants were permitted to wear a livery, under severe penalties ; and this law he took care to enforce with the utmost rigour. It is told us, by Bacon, that the king, one day paying a visit to the earl of Oxford, was entertained by him with all possible splendor and magnificence. When the king was ready to depart, he saw ranged, on both sides, a great number of men, dressed up in very rich liveries, apparently to do him honour. The king, surprised at such a number of domestics, as he thought them, cried out, *What, my lord of Oxford, are all these fine fellows your menial servants !* The earl, not perceiving the king's drift, answered, with a smile, that they were only men whom he kept in pay to do him honour upon such occasions. At this the king, started a little, and said, *By my faith, my lord, I thank you for your good cheer ; but I must not suffer to have the laws broken ; my attorney-general must talk with you.* The historian adds, that the king exacted a severe fine for this transgression of the statute.

It has been already observed what a perverted use was made of monasteries, and other places appropriated to religious worship, by the number of criminals who took refuge in them. This privilege the clergy assumed as their undoubted right, and those places of pretended sanctity were become the abode of murderers, robbers, and conspirators. Witches and necromancers were the only persons who could not avail themselves of the advantages of the security these afforded : they whose crimes were only fictitious, were the only people who had not the benefit of such a retreat. Henry used all his interest with the pope to abolish these sanctuaries, but without effect ; all that he could procure was, that, if thieves, murderers, or robbers, registered as sanctuary men, should sally out and commit fresh offences and retreat again, in such cases, they might be taken out of the sanctuary, and delivered up to justice.

Henry politically pretended the utmost submission to all the pope's decrees, and shewed the greatest respect to the clergy, but still was guided by them in no single instance of his conduct. The pope, at one time, was so far imposed upon by his seeming attachment to the church, that he even invited him to renew the crusades for recovering the Holy Land. Henry's answer to this ought to be remembered : he assured his holiness, that no prince in Christendom would be more forward than he to undertake so glorious and necessary an expedition ; but as his dominions lay very distant from Constantinople, it would be better to apply to the kings of France and Spain for their assistance ; and that, in the mean time, he would come to their aid himself, *as soon as all the differences between the Christian princes were brought to an end.*

This was, at once, a polite refusal and an oblique reproach.

Henry had seen the fatal consequences of having favourites, and therefore resolved to have none; he even excluded, from his privy-council, all such as, by their titles or fortunes, might attempt to govern him, instead of executing his intentions. His council was composed of private men, who had learning and wisdom to advise, but neither influence nor ambition to govern.

But, while he was thus employed in lowering his nobility and clergy, he was using every art to extend the privileges of the people. In former reigns they were sure to suffer, on whatever side they fought, if they had the misfortune to lose the victory: this rendered each party desperate, in cases of civil war; and this was the cause of such terrible slaughters. He therefore procured the passing of an act, by which it was established, that no person should be impeached or attainted for assisting the king *for the time being*, or, in other words, him who should be then actually on the throne. This excellent statute served to repress the desire of a civil war, as several would naturally take arms, in defence of that side on which they were certain of losing nothing by a defeat, and their numbers would intimidate insurgents.

But his greatest efforts were directed to promote trade and commerce, because this naturally introduced a spirit of liberty among the people, and disengaged them from their dependence on the nobility. Before this happy æra all our towns owed their original to some strong castle in the neighbourhood, where some great lord generally resided; and these also were made use of as prisons for all sorts of criminals. In these also there was generally

a garrison, or a number of armed men, who depended on the nobleman's bounty for support. The number of these, of course, drew all the artificers, victuallers, and shop-keepers to settle in some place adjacent, in order to furnish the lord and his attendants with what necessaries they wanted. The farmers also and husbandmen, in the neighbourhood, built their houses there, to be protected against the numerous gangs of robbers that hid themselves in the woods by day, and infested the country by night, who were called Robertsmen. Henry, on the other hand, endeavoured to bring the towns from such a neighbourhood, by inviting the inhabitants to a more commercial situation. He attempted to teach them frugality and payment of debts, the life and soul of industry, by his own example, and never omitted the rights of commerce in all his treaties with foreign princes.

About this time the whole world seemed to improve: Sweden, France, and Spain, enjoyed excellent monarchs, who encouraged and protected the rising arts. The Portuguese had sailed round the Cape of Good Hope, and Columbus had made the discovery of America. Henry in imitation of them, gave a patent to some Bristol and Portuguese merchants to go in quest of new countries. But an accident gave him a better opportunity of improving commerce, than his most sanguine hopes could have aspired to: the king of Spain and his queen, being upon their return to their own dominions, after the conclusion of a successful war in Holland, were driven, by a storm on the coasts of England. As soon as Henry had notice of their arrival, he received them both with marks of the sincerest friendship and respect, meditating, in the mean time, how to make his subjects reap some ad-

vantage from the accident. He therefore treated them with a splendor which was by no means agreeable to his own nature; and, while he kept them thus entertained with a round of pageantry and amusements, he concluded a treaty of commerce, which has, even to this day, continued to be beneficial to his posterity.

Having thus at length seen his country civilized, the people pay their taxes without insurrections, the nobility learning a just subordination, the laws alone suffered to inflict punishments, towns begun to separate from the castles of the nobility; commerce every day encreased; foreigners either feared England, or sought its alliance; and the spirit of faction was happily extinguished at home; he was at peace with all Europe, and he had issued out a general pardon to his own subjects. It was in this situation of things that he died, of the gout in his stomach, having lived fifty-two years, and reigned twenty-three. Since the times of Alfred, England had not seen such another king. He rendered his subjects powerful and happy, and wrought a greater change in this kingdom, than it was possible to expect could be effected in so short a time. If he had any fault, it was, that having begun his reign with oeconomy, as he grew old his desires seemed to change their object, from the use of money, to the pleasure of hoarding it; but we can easily excuse him as he only saved for the public, the royal coffers being then the only treasury of the state; and in proportion to the king's finances, the public might be said to be either rich or indigent.

LETTER XXIX.

NEVER did prince come to the throne with a conjuncture of so many fortunate circumstances in his favour as Henry VIII. *A. D. 1509.* who now took upon him the government of the kingdom. His prudent father left him a peaceable kingdom, prudent ministers, and a well stored treasury. All factions were extinguished, and all divisions united in his person: he by the father's side claimed from the house of Lancaster, and by his mother's from the house of York. He was at peace with all Europe, and his subjects were every day growing more powerful and more wealthy: commerce and arts had been introduced in the former reign, and they seemed to find in England a favourable reception. The young king himself was beautiful in person, expert in polite exercises, and loved by his subjects. The old king who was himself a scholar, had him instructed in all the learning of the times; so that he was perfectly versed in school divinity at the age of eighteen.

Yet, from this beginning, you must not expect to read the history of a good prince. All these advantages were either the gifts of nature, of fortune, or of his father: with all these happy talents, Henry VIII. wanted the two great requisites in forming every good character, wisdom and virtue. The learning he had, if it might be called by that name, served only to inflame his pride, but not controul his vicious affections. The love of his subjects was testified by their adulations, and served as another meteor to lead him astray. His vast wealth instead of relieving his subjects, or encreasing his power, only contributed to sup-

ply his debaucheries, or gratify the rapacity of the ministers of his pleasure. But happy for him, had his fault rested here; he was a tyrant; humanity takes the alarm at his cruelty, and, whatever fortunate events might have been the consequence of his designs, no good man but must revolt at the means he took for their accomplishment.

The first act of injustice which marked his reign, was his prosecution of Epfom and Dudley, the judges whom his father had constituted to enquire into cases of treason, and levy fines proportionable to the offence. Their conduct was examined, but, nothing being found against them, that could amount to a capital conviction, a false accusation was produced, and they were convicted of having plotted against the new king, and received sentence to be beheaded, which was executed accordingly.

These two judges had been long hated by the people, though apparently without a cause; they only put the laws in execution against criminals, and, instead of their lives deprived the guilty of their fortunes. This action of an unjust compliance with popular clamour, was followed by another still more detrimental to the nation, yet more pleasing to the people; the spirit of chivalry and conquest was not yet quite extinguished in the nation; France was still an object of desire, and Henry was resolved once more to strike at the crown. It was in vain that one of his old prudent counsellors objected, that conquest on the continent would only be prejudicial to the kingdom, and that England, from its situation, was not destined for extensive empire; the young king, deaf to all remonstrances, and perhaps inspired by the voice of the people, resolved to lead an army into that kingdom. The consequences of the cam-

paign were an useless victory and an empty triumph. The French fled without fighting; a truce was concluded between the two kings; and Henry returned home to dissipate, in more peaceful follies, the large sums which had been amassed for very different purposes by his father.

But, while he thus changed from one pleasure to another, it was requisite to find out a minister and favourite who would take *caré* of the kingdom. Indifferent princes ever attempt to rule, and are ruled, by favourites, and soon a proper person was found to answer the king's intention in this particular: the man I mean was the famous Cardinal Wolsey; and as a great part of this reign was *ruled* by him, his history may, with propriety, make a part in that of his master. Thomas Wolsey was the son of a private gentleman (and not of a butcher, as is commonly reported) in Ipswich: he was sent to Oxford so early, that he was a bachelor at fourteen, and from that time called the boy-bachelor. He rose, by degrees, upon quitting college, from one preferment to another, till he was made rector of Lymington by the marquis of Dorset, whose children he had instructed. He had not long resided at this living, when one of the justices of the peace put him in the stocks, for being drunk and raising disturbances in a neighbouring fair. This disgrace, however, did not retard his promotion; he rose, by degrees, till he was, at last, intrusted with negotiating an intended marriage between Henry VII. and Margaret of Savoy. His dispatch, upon that occasion, procured him the deanery of Lincoln; and in this situation it was that Henry VIII. pitched upon him as a favourite, and entrusted him with the administration of affairs. Presently after this, being

introduced at court, he was made a privy counsellor, and, as such, had an opportunity of ingratiating himself with the king, who found him at once submissive and enterprising. Wolsey sung, laughed, danced, with every libertine of the court: and his house was the scene of all the king's criminal pleasures and amours. To such a weak and vicious monarch as Henry, qualities of this nature were highly pleasing, and Wolsey was made his prime minister, and managed the whole kingdom at his pleasure. The people saw, with indignation, the new favourite's mean condescensions to the king, and his arrogance to themselves. They had long regarded the vicious insolence and unbecoming splendor of the clergy with envy and detestation, and Wolsey's greatness served to bring a new odium upon that body, already too much the object of the people's dislike.

Wolsey had some talents as a minister, but his failings out-balanced them, being excessively revengeful, and ambitious and intolerably proud. Among other instances of his ambition, he aspired at the popedom. Ferdinand, who was then emperor of Germany, promised him interest to procure it, and this consequently attached the English minister more closely to the emperor: this monarch was then at war with France, and each power solicited the alliance of England. It was the interest of the English calmly to look on as spectators of the quarrel, and suffer its rivals in power to grow weak by their mutual animosity: Wolsey, however, preferring his own interest to that of his country or his master, engaged in a league against France. Soon after, however, the pope dying, and the emperor failing in his promise, Wolsey,

in revenge, induced his master to change sides, and assist France against Ferdinand.

A victory over the Scots, rather ostentatious than useful, served, in some measure to repress the discontents of the people during this mal-administration of the ecclesiastical favourite: this victory was obtained by the earl of Surrey over James IV. of Scotland; it was fought at Floddon Field, and the Scots, upon this occasion, lost the flower of their nobility and gentry; and James, their king, was slain in battle.

Success ever serves to stop the murmurings of the English, and no nation can better endure to be splendidly miserable. Wolfey now became a cardinal, grew every day more powerful, and more desirous of power: the pope was sensible of his influence over the king, and therefore created him his legate in England. The pontiff's design was to make him thus instrumental in draining the kingdom of money, upon pretence of employing it in a war against the Turks, but, in reality, to fill his own coffers. In this he so well served the court of Rome, that he, some time after, made him legate for life: he was now, therefore, at once, a legate, a cardinal, and a bishop, a prime minister, and possessed of numberless church-benefices: yet still unsatisfied, he desired greater promotions. He therefore procured a bull from the pope, empowering him to make knights and counts, to legitimate bastards, to give degrees in arts, law, physic, and divinity, and grant all sorts of dispensations. So much pride and power could not avoid giving high offence to the nobility; yet none dared to vent their indignation, so greatly were they in terror of his vindictive temper. The duke of Buckingham, son

of him who lost his life in the reign of Richard III. was the only person who had resolution enough to complain. His threats were soon conveyed to Wolsey by an informer, who was not slow to accuse the duke of high-treason. The substance of his impeachment was, that he had consulted a fortune-teller concerning his succession to the crown, and had affected to make himself popular. This was but a weak pretext to take away the life of a nobleman, whose father died in defence of the late king : however, he was condemned to die as a traitor. When the sentence was pronouncing against him, and the high steward came to mention the word traitor, the unhappy prisoner could no longer contain : *My lords*, cried he to his judges, *I am no traitor, and for what you have now done against me, take my sincere forgiveness : as for my life, I think it is not worth petitioning for ; may God forgive you, and pity me !* He was soon after executed on Tower-hill.

Every just man must feel the highest indignation at so unmerited a punishment. In the former reign, the few that perished under the hand of the executioner, were really culpable ; but here we see a nobleman's life taken away, only for his dislike of an aspiring and licentious upstart. It is this cruelty of punishing without guilt, and not the number of executions in a reign, that distinguishes it into a tyrannical and merciful one. Perhaps there were more executions under Henry VII. than his successor ; and yet the first was a just and merciful prince, the latter an arbitrary and merciless tyrant.

By this time all the immense treasures of the late king were quite exhausted on empty pageants, guilty pleasures, or vain treaties and expeditions. Wolsey was a proper instrument to supply the king

with money, which now began to be wanted; this he extorted by the name of benevolence: Henry minded not by what methods it was raised, provided he had but the enjoyment of it. However, his minister met some opposition in his attempts to levy those involuntary contributions: having exacted a considerable subsidy from the clergy, he next addressed himself to the house of commons, but they only granted half the supplies he demanded. The cardinal was highly offended at their parsimony, and desired to be heard in the house; but as this would have destroyed the very form and constitution of that august body, they replied, that none could be admitted to reason there but such as were members. This was the first attempt made, in the present reign, to render the king master of the debates in parliament; Wolsey first paved the way, and, unfortunately for the kingdom, the king too well improved upon his design.

Wolsey was, soon after, raised to still greater dignities than before: he was at once, archbishop of York, bishop of Durham, abbot of St. Alban's, a cardinal, legate for life, lord chancellor of England, prime minister, and favourite, and cared for or feared by all the powers of Europe: he now, therefore, undertook more openly to render the king independant of his parliament, and levied the subsidy granted by them for four years, and consequently to be paid at four different times, all at once. Against this the poor, who were the greatest sufferers, most loudly exclaimed; but he disregarded their clamours, secure in the king's approbation, and the pope's protection.

These proceedings only paved the way to still greater extortions: Wolsey was too haughty to

be refused in his demands by the house of commons, and determined to levy money upon the king's authority alone. This was deemed a breach of the Magna Charta, and the people absolutely refused to comply. Even a general rebellion threatened to ensue. The king, finding what was likely to be the consequence of the cardinal's precipitate measures, pretended they were carried on without his authority; but, at the same time, demanded from the people a benevolence, which was only an artifice to extort money under a different name. The people seemed sensible of the king's art, and the citizens of London refused to give the benevolence demanded: their example was followed by the country and an universal defection seemed to prevail. The king, apprehensive of bad consequences by persisting in his demand, thought proper to retract for this time, and wait a more favourable opportunity of oppression.

You now find the people labouring under a very different form of oppression from that in the reigns preceding Henry VII. In those earlier times their miseries chiefly arose from the licentiousness of the nobility; in this reign they proceeded from the usurpations of the king. Before Henry VII. had balanced the government, the people often discharged their taxes by an insurrection; but now that the present Henry had destroyed that balance again, the people were obliged to pay taxes that were not due. In short, they now seemed as miserable as when their great restorer had brought them from anarchy; an arbitrary king, an avaricious pope, a revengeful favourite, a luxurious clergy, all conspired to harass them: yet during this whole reign, there was no rebellion; not from

the justice of the king's administration, nor from the love the people had to their sovereign; but, happily for the reigning tyrant, he enjoyed the effects of his predecessor's prudence, not his own.

LETTER XXX.

AS, in a family, the faults and the impertinence of servants are often to be ascribed to their masters; so, in a state, the vices and the insolence of favourites should be justly attributed to the king who employs them. The pride of Wolsey was great, but his riches were still greater, and in order to have a pretext for amassing such sums, he undertook to found two new colleges at Oxford, for which he received every day fresh grants from the pope and the king. To execute his scheme, he obtained a liberty of suppressing several monasteries, and converting their funds to the benefit of his intended scheme. Whatever might have been the pope's inducement to grant him these privileges, nothing could be more fatal to the pontiff's interests; for Henry was thus himself taught to imitate afterwards what he had seen a subject perform without crime or danger.

Hitherto the administration of affairs was carried on by Wolsey alone: and for the king, he lost in the embraces of his mistresses all the complaints of the nation, and the cardinal undertook to keep him ignorant, in order to maintain his own authority. But now a period approached, that was to put an end to this minister's exorbitant power: one of the most extraordinary and important revolutions that ever employed the attention of man, was now ripe for execution. But to have a clear idea of this

grand reformation, it will be proper to take a cursory view of the state of the church at that time, and observe by what seemingly contradictory means Providence produces the happiest events.

The church of Rome had now, for more than a thousand years, been corrupting the sacred doctrines of Christianity, and converting into a temporality the kingdom of another world. The popes were frequently found at the head of their own armies, fighting for their dominions with the arm of flesh, and forgetting, in cruelty and immoral politics, the pretended sanctity of their character. They had drained other kingdoms of their treasures upon the most infamous pretexts, and were proud of setting at Rome, in their own conduct, an example of refined pleasure and studied luxury. The cardinals, prelates, and dignitaries of the church, lived and were served like voluptuous princes, and some of them were found to possess eight or nine bishoprics at a time. Wherever the church governs, it extorts its power with cruelty; and to their luxury these great ones added the crime of being tyrants too.

As for the inferior clergy, both popish and protestant writers exclaim against their dissolute and abandoned morals. They publickly kept mistresses, and bequeathed to their bastards whatever they were able to save from their pleasures to extort from the poor. There is still to be seen, says a fine writer, a will made by a bishop of Cambray, in which he sets aside a certain sum *for the bastards he has had already, and those which, by the blessing of God, he may yet happen to have.* In many parts of England and Germany the people obliged the priests to have concubines, so that the laity might

keep their wives in greater security; while the poor laborious peasant and artizan saw all the fruits of their toil go, not to clothe and maintain their own little families, but to pamper men who insulted and despised them.

But the vices of the clergy were no greater than their ignorance; few of them knew the meaning of their own Latin mass; they were chiefly employed in finding out witches, and exorcising the possessed. But what most increased the hatred of the people against them, was the selling pardons and absolutions for sin at certain stated prices. A deacon, or subdeacon, who should commit murder, was absolved from his crime, and allowed to possess three benefices, upon paying twenty crowns. A bishop or an abbot might commit murder for ten pounds. Every crime had its stated price, and absolutions were given, not only for sins already committed, but for such as should be committed hereafter. The wisest of the people looked with silent detestation on these impositions, and the ignorant, whom nature seemed to have formed for slavery, began to open their eyes to such glaring absurdities.

There arose, at last, a champion to rescue human nature from its degeneracy. This was the famous Martin Luther. Leo X. being employed in building the church at St. Peter's at Rome, in the year 1519, in order to procure money for carrying on this project, he gave a commission for selling indulgences, or, in other words, a deliverance from the pains of purgatory, either for one's self or other friends. There were every where shops opened where these were sold; but, in general, they were to be had at taverns and such like places. These indulgences were granted to the Dominican friars to be distributed by them, whereas

the Augustine friars had been in possession of the distribution of them time out of mind before. Martin Luther was an Augustine monk, and one of those who resented this transferring the sale of indulgences to another order. He began to shew his indignation, by preaching against their efficacy: opposition soon drove him further than he at first intended to go, and, now the veil was lifted, he proceeded to examine the authority of the pope himself. The people who had long groaned under the papal tyranny, heard his discourses with pleasure, and defended him against the authority and machinations of the church of Rome. Frederic elector of Saxony, surnamed the wise, openly protected him. Luther as openly declaimed against the number of sacraments, reducing the seven held by the church of Rome, first to three, and afterwards to two: from thence he proceeded to examine the doctrine of transubstantiation, to shew the folly of supposing a purgatory, and the dangerous consequences of celibacy among the clergy.

The pope issued out his bulls against Luther, and the Dominican friars procured his books to be burned. Luther abused the Dominicans, and boldly, in the streets of Wirtemberg, burned the bull of the pope. In the mean time the dispute was carried on by writings on either side: Luther, tho' opposed by the pope, the cardinals, and all the body of the clergy, supported his cause singly and with success. If indeed we look into his works at this day, we shall find them trifling and unsatisfactory enough; but then he had only ignorance to contend with, and, ill as he wrote, they answered still worse. Opinions are inculcated upon the minds of the public, rather by fortitude and perseverance, than by strength of reasoning or beauty

of thought, and no man had more fortitude and more perseverance than he.

In this dispute it was the fate of Henry VIII. to be one of the champions. His father, who had given him the education of a scholar, permitted him to be instructed in school divinity, which then composed the learning of the times. He was, therefore, willing to give the world a demonstration of his abilities in this respect, and desired the pope's permission to read the works of Luther, which had been forbidden to be read under pain of excommunication. Having readily obtained this request, the king defended the seven sacraments, from St. Thomas Aquinas, and shewed some skill in school divinity, though it is thought that Wolsey had the chief hand in directing him. A book being thus finished in haste, it was sent to Rome for the pope's approbation; the pope, ravished with its eloquence and depth, compared the work to that of St. Augustine or St. Jerome, and gave Henry the title of *Defender of the Faith*, little suspecting that Henry was soon going to be one of the most terrible enemies that ever the church of Rome had yet met with.

Besides these causes which contributed to render the Romish church odious or contemptible, there were still others proceeding from political motives. Clement VII. had succeeded Leo, and, the hereditary animosity between the emperor and the pope breaking out into a war, Clement was imprisoned in the castle of St. Angelo, and, with thirteen cardinals besides, kept in custody for his ransom. As the demands of the emperor were exorbitant, Henry undertook to negotiate for the pope, and procured a treaty in his favour; but his holiness, in the mean time, corrupting his guards,

had the good fortune to escape from confinement, and left the treaty unfinished, but sent Henry a letter of thanks for his mediation. The conduct of the emperor shewed Henry that the Pope might be injured with impunity; and the behaviour of the Pope manifested but little of that sanctity or infallibility to which the Pontiffs pretended. Besides, as he had obliged the Pope, he supposed that he might upon any emergency, expect a return of favour.

It was in this situation of the church and of the Pope, that a new drama was going to be performed, which was to change the whole system of Europe. Henry had now been married eighteen years to Catharine of Arragon, who had been brought over from Spain to marry his elder brother, prince Arthur, who died some months after his cohabitation with her. Henry had three children by this lady, one of whom was still living, while she herself was esteemed for her virtue and the gentleness of her disposition. The king, though he felt no real passion, either for the qualifications of her mind or person, yet for a long time broke out into no flagrant contempt: he ranged from beauty to beauty in the court, and his title and authority always procured him a ready compliance from female frailty. It happened at length, that, among the maids of honour that then attended the queen, there was one Anna Bullen, the daughter of a gentleman of distinction, though not of the nobility. Her beauty surpassed what had hitherto appeared at this voluptuous court; her features were regular, mild and attractive; her stature elegant, though below the middle size: while her wit and vivacity even exceeded the allurements of her person. The king, who never restrained one passion which he

desired to gratify, saw, and loved her ; but, after several efforts to induce her to comply with his criminal passion, he found that without marriage he could have no hopes of succeeding. This obstacle, therefore, he quickly undertook to remove : his own queen was now become hateful to him ; and, in order to procure a divorce, he pretended that his conscience rebuked him, for having so long lived in incest with his present queen, formerly his brother's wife. This every person of candour saw was only a pretext to cover his real motive : he himself had eagerly solicited the match with queen Catharine ; he had lived with her eighteen years without any scruple, and had the pope's licence for this cohabitation ; but he asserted, that a wounded conscience was his motive, and none of his subjects offered to divulge the real one.

In this perplexity, therefore he applied to Clement VII. who owed him obligations, and from whom he expected a ready compliance to dissolve the bull of the former pope, who had given him permission to marry Catharine, and to declare that it was contrary to all laws both divine and human. Clement was now in the utmost perplexity. Queen Catharine was aunt to the emperor who had lately made him a prisoner, and whose resentment he dreaded to rekindle, by thus injuring so near a relation : besides he could not, in honour, declare the bull of a former pope illicit, for this would be entirely destroying the papal infallibility. On the other hand, Henry was his protector and friend ; the dominions of England were the chief resource of his finances ; and the king of France, some time before, had got a bull of divorce, in somewhat similar circumstances. In this exigence he thought the best method was to spin out the affair by a ne-

gotiation ; and thus he argued, temporised, promised, recanted, and disputed, hoping that the king's passion would never hold out during the tedious course of an ecclesiastical controversy. In this he was mistaken ; Henry had been taught to argue as well as he, and quickly found, or wrested, many texts of scripture to favour his opinions and his passions. To his arguments he added threats, which probably had greater influence : the pope was assured, that the English were already too much disposed to withdraw their obedience from the holy see, and that, if he continued to refuse, the whole country would readily follow their monarch's example, and exclude themselves from his protection. The king even proposed to his holiness, whether, if he were denied the putting away his present queen, he might not have a dispensation to marry two wives at a time ? The pope, though his measures were already taken not to grant the bull, yet still seemed unresolved, as if waiting for more full and authentic information.

During these solicitations, on which Henry's happiness seemed to depend, he expected, in his favourite Wolsey a warm defender, and a steady adherent : but in this he was mistaken. Wolsey seemed to be in pretty much such a dilemma as the pope himself. On the one hand, he was to please his master the king, from whom he had received a thousand marks of favour ; on the other hand he could not disoblige the pope, whose servant he more immediately was, and who had power to punish his disobedience. In this dilemma, he chose to stand neuter : though, of all mankind, he was the most haughty, he on this occasion gave way in all things to his colleague cardinal Campegio, sent by the pope from Italy. Wolsey's me-

thod of temporizing, highly disgusted the king, yet he endeavoured to conceal his resentment: he now only looked out for some man of equal abilities and less art, and it was not long before accident threw in his way one Thomas Cranmer, of greater abilities than the former, and rather more integrity. Cranmer was a doctor of divinity, and a professor at Cambridge, but had lost his place upon marrying, contrary to the institutes of the canon law, which enjoined him celibacy. He had travelled into Germany, where he read Luther's works, and embraced his doctrine; and upon his return, was tutor to the sons of a gentleman, who one night happened to entertain two of the principal men of the court. Cranmer, being asked his opinion of the king's divorce, which was then the topic of the conversation, delivered himself in so learned a manner, that the king was soon informed of his abilities, and ordered him to follow the court.

The king's resentment now appeared more openly against the cardinal. The attorney-general was ordered to prepare a bill of indictment against him, and soon after he himself was ordered to resign the great seal. Crimes are readily found against a man when he is hated, and the Cardinal was sentenced to be excluded from the the protection of the laws. As soon as he was out-lawed, the king commanded him to retire to a country-house, and directed that an inventory of his goods should be taken, which contained immense riches, acquired by various methods of guilt and extortion: of fine holland alone there were found in his houses a thousand pieces, which may serve to give an idea of the rest of his wealth. The parliament confirmed the sentence of the courts, and he was sent an exile to his country-seat, there to wait the king's disposal of his

person, with all the fluctuations of hope and apprehension. Still, however, he was left the archbishoprick of York, and, even shattered as his fortunes were, he was resolved to perform the ceremony of his instalment there with a magnificence little suitable to his present condition; but, while he was preparing to enjoy, in this retreat, those splendors which he ever loved, by another unexpected revolution, he was, at the king's command, arrested by the earl of Northumberland for high treason. He at first refused to comply, as being a cardinal; but, finding the earl bent upon performing his commission, he complied, and set out, by easy journeys, for London, to appear as a criminal in a place where he formerly acted as a king. In his way he staid a fortnight at the earl of Shrewsbury's, where one day at dinner he was taken ill, not without violent suspicions of having poisoned himself: being brought forward from thence, with much difficulty he reached Leicester-abbey, where, the monks coming out to receive him, he said, Father abbot, I am come to lay my bones among you. As his disorder increased, an officer being placed near his bedside, at once to guard and attend him, he cried out to him, *O, if I had served my God as I have served my king, he would not thus have forsaken me in adversity.* He died soon *A. D. 1530.* after, in all the pangs of repentance and remorse, and left a life which he had all along rendered turbid by ambition, till he found that all his ambition was but vanity at the last. He left two natural children behind him, one of whom, being a priest, was loaded with church preferments. Henry, being thus freed from a person whom, he considered as an obstacle to his intentions, by the advice of Cranmer, had the legality of his

present marriage canvassed in the different universities of Europe. It was very extraordinary to see the king on one side soliciting the universities to be favourable to his passion, and on the other, the emperor pressing them to incline to his aunt; Henry liberally rewarded those doctors who declared in his favour, and the emperor granted benefices to such as voted on his side of the debate. Time has discovered these intrigues. In one of Henry's account-books, we find the disbursements he made upon these occasions; to a deacon he gave a crown, to a subdeacon two crowns, and so of the rest, to each in proportion to his consequence. The person who bribed upon these occasions, however, excused himself by declaring, that he never paid the money till after the vote was given. Henry at length prevailed; his liberalities were greater than those of his rival, as he was most interested in the success of the debate; all the colleges in Italy and France unanimously declared his present marriage against all law, divine and human, and that therefore it was not at first in the power of the pope to grant a dispensation. The only places where it was most warmly opposed, were at Cambridge and Oxford: these universities, it seems, had, even then, more freedom and integrity than were to be found elsewhere; but at last they also concurred in the same opinion.

The agents of Henry were not content with the suffrages of the universities: the opinions of the Rabbies were also demanded, but they were easily bought up in his favour. Thus fortified, the king was resolved to oppose even the pope himself, for his passion by no means could brook the delays and subterfuges of the holy see: being, therefore, supported by his clergy, and authorised by the uni-

verities ; having seen the pope formerly degraded by a lay monarch, and Luther's doctrine followed by thousands ; and yet still further instigated by the king of France, he, without further dispensation, annulled his marriage with queen Catharine, and Cranmer, now become an archbishop, pronounced the decree. *A. D. 1533.*

The queen, during this contest, always supported her rights with resolution, and yet with modesty : at length, however, having found the inutility of further resistance, she retired to the country, without once offering to complain : she saw the power of her rival, and yielded without murmuring. Anna Bullen had already consented to marry the king, and even shared his bed two months before his marriage with Catharine was dissolved. Though her prudence and her virtue demanded esteem in the former parts of her conduct, yet she now for a moment forgot the ties of each, and gave a loose to her triumph. She passed through London with a magnificence greater than had ever been known before : the streets were strewed, the walls were hung, the conduits ran with wine, while she and her corpulent lover rode through the city like the heroine and knight of a romance.

In the mean time, the pope now thought himself obliged to hold no measures with the king ; and, being also frightened by the menaces of the emperor, published a sentence, declaring queen Catharine alone to be Henry's lawful wife, and requiring him to take her again, with a denunciation of censures in case of a refusal. When Henry received news of the sentence given against him at Rome, he was convinced that no measures could be kept with the holy see, and therefore no longer delayed to execute his long meditated scheme of se-

parating entirely from the church of Rome. The parliament was at his devotion: a part of the clergy was for him as they had already declared against the pope, when they had decreed in favour of the divorce; the people were flattered with the expectation of being rid of the burden of their taxes; and such as were displeased to see Italian bishops hold English church preferments, expected their downfall: in short, all things conspired to co-operate with his designs; he therefore at once ordered himself to be declared by his clergy Head of the Church. The parliament confirmed his title, and abolished all the authority of the pope in England, the tribute of Peter-pence, and the collation to ecclesiastical benefices. The people came into the king's project with joy, and took an oath, called the oath of Supremacy: all the credit of the pope, that had subsisted for ages, was now at once overthrown, and few, except those who held to religious houses, seemed dissatisfied. They who believed that it would have been dangerous to break with the pope, were now convinced that it could be effected with impunity; and it was soon perceived, that all authority, which is not supported by power, is nothing but an empty name.

LETTER XXXI.

IN this manner began the reformation in England, and by such surprising methods Providence brought about its designs, as if to mock human sagacity. Let us now pursue its progress, and follow this capricious monarch through his various projects, cruelties, and inconsistencies. The parliament were now entirely dependent upon the king : they had, from the beginning, sided with him in his separating from the church of Rome, and consequently were now obliged to comply with all his other measures, in order to strengthen the new reformation.

Henry was very sensible that the parliament was even from motives of interest, entirely devoted to him, and therefore he was resolved to make use of the opportunity, and render himself absolute. He therefore opposed the parliament against the monks, and availed himself of the hatred which that body incurred by their suppression : the parliament at first began by examining the abuses practised in monasteries, and finding some, condemned all : but, while they were employed in suppressing them, Henry was busy in destroying the power of the suppressors. This was the origin of the unlimited power he now assumed : his parliament, at different times, passed every statute he thought proper to propose, how absurd soever : and many of them were in fact, marked with the highest absurdities. They testified their satisfaction, not only for what he had done, but also for whatever he had intended to do : they enacted, that the same obedience should be paid to the king's proclamation as to an

act of parliament, which was destroying all their power at one blow ; they declared their readiness to believe, not only what had been directed, but whatever the king should direct, in matters of religion, for the future : but to crown all, they enacted that the king should not pay his debts, that such as had been paid by him, should refund the money.

Being thus impowered to act as he thought proper, he went vigorously to work in the suppression of monasteries, colleges, and religious houses. Cambridge and Oxford, without any regard to their antiquity, shared the same fate with the rest, and the lectures were for a time discontinued, and the revenues confiscated. To reconcile the people to these proceedings, Henry took care to have the counterfeit reliques exposed, the scandalous lives of the friars and nuns made publick, and all their debaucheries detected. Whatever had served to engage the people in superstition, was publicly burnt ; but what grieved the people most to see, were the bones of Thomas a Becket, the saint of Canterbury, burnt in publick, and his rich shrine, in which there was a diamond of great value, confiscated among the common plunder. The people looked on with silent horror, afraid to rebel : equally detesting the vices of the monks and the impiety of the king.

But though the king had entirely separated himself from Rome, yet he was by no means willing to be a follower of Luther. The invocation of saints was not yet abolished by him, but only restrained : he ordered the Bible to be translated into the vulgar tongue, but not put into the hands of the laity. It was a capital crime to believe in the pope's supre-

macy, and yet equally heinous to be of the reformed religion, as practised in Germany. His opinions in religion were delivered in a law, which from its horrid consequences, was termed the *Bloody Statute*; by which it was ordained, that whoever by word or writing, denied transubstantiation, and whoever maintained that the communion in both kinds was necessary, or that it was lawful for priests to marry, or that vows of chastity could innocently be broken, or that private masses were unprofitable, or that auricular confession was unnecessary, should be burnt or hanged as the court should determine.

The kingdom at that time, was, in some measure, divided between the followers of Luther and the adherents to the pope: this statute, with Henry's former decrees in some measure excluded both, and therefore opened a wide field for persecution.

These persecutions, however, were preceded by one of a different nature, arising neither from religious nor political causes, but tyrannical caprice. Anna Bullen his queen, was herself of the Lutheran persuasion, and had secretly favoured that party: these attachments soon created her enemies, who only waited some favourable occasion to destroy her credit with the king; and that occasion presented itself but too soon. The king's passion was by this time, quite exhausted; the only desire he ever had for her was that brutal appetite which enjoyment soon destroys: he was fallen in love, if we may call it love, once more, with Jane Seymour, a maid of honour to the queen.

As soon as the queen's enemies perceived the king's disgust, they soon gave him an opportunity to gratify his inclinations, by accusing her of sundry intrigues with her domestics; which accusation

was eagerly caught up by the king. All his passions were in extreme; he immediately flew to parliament, and had her accused of adultery and incest with her own brother. This parliament, who had long shewn themselves the timid ministers of all his passions, condemned the queen and her brother, without ever knowing on what foundation the sentence was grounded.

Her brother, Lord Rochfort, was beheaded, though there was not the least proof of his guilt: one Norris and Brereton were hanged for only having paid her such compliments, as would now merely pass for gallantry and innocent amusement: Smeton a musician, was compelled to acknowledge his having received favours from her, and he was then hanged without an opportunity of being confronted by the queen.

Upon such slight suspicions was this unhappy queen sent to the Tower, in order to wait the execution of her sentence. She who had been once the envied object of royal favour, was now going to give a new instance of the capriciousness of fortune: she was ever of a chearful disposition, and her easy levities, perhaps, disgusted the gloomy tyrant. She had distributed in the last year of her life, not less than fifteen thousand pounds among the poor, and was at once their protector and darling. Upon being conducted to her prison, she sat down to address the king by letter, for mercy: in this she insisted upon her innocence in the strongest terms: *You have raised me, said she, from privacy, to make me a lady; from a lady you made me a countess; from a countess a queen; and from a queen I shall shortly become a saint.* On the morning of her execution, she sent for Mr. Kingston, the keeper of the Tower, to whom, upon entering

the prison, she said, *Mr. Kingston, I hear I am not to die till noon, and I am sorry for it, for I thought to be dead before this time, and free from a life of pain.* The keeper attempting to comfort her, by assuring her the pain would be very little, she replied, *I have heard the executioner is very expert, and (clasping her neck with her hands, laughing) I have but a little neck.* Kingston who gives this account, continues to observe that he had seen many men and women executed, but never one whose fortitude was equal to hers. She was beheaded soon after, *A. D. 1536.* May 19, behaving with the utmost decency and resolution.

Anna Bullen seemed to be guilty of no other crime than that of having survived the king's affections: many crowned heads had already been put to death in England, but this was the first royal execution upon a scaffold. Henry ordered his parliament to give him a divorce, between her sentence and execution, thus to bastardize Elizabeth, the only child he had by her, as he had already bastardized Mary, his only child by queen Catharine.

The very next day after her execution he married Jane Seymour, who died the year following, after having been delivered of a son.

In the mean time the fires of Smithfield began to blaze: those who adhered to the pope, or those who followed Luther, were equally the objects of royal vengeance and ecclesiastical persecution. Thomas Cromwell, raised by the king's caprice from a blacksmith's son to be a royal favourite (for tyrants ever raise their favourites from the lowest of the people) and Cranmer, now become archbishop of Canterbury, with all their might assisted the reformation: bishop Gardiner, and the duke of

Norfolk, on the other hand, were for leading the king back to his former superstitions, with every art, and Cromwell fell a sacrifice to their intrigues; but the duke and bishop did not succeed. Unhappily for his subjects, the king became an equal persecutor of the two religions proposed for his acceptance.

It was now that England saw a spectacle to strike the boldest with horror: a company of people condemned and executed all together, some for being stedfast to the pope, and others for adhering to Luther: among this number were Dr. Robert Barnes, Thomas Gerrard, and William Jerom, for being Lutherans; Buttolph, Daneplifs Philpot, and Brinholm, for continuing or acknowledge the pope. These were all burnt together, without ever being permitted to plead their own cause, or even to know their crimes or their accusers. The people in the North indeed, during these times of cruelty, ventured to rise in rebellion; but by the means of the duke of Norfolk they were soon brought to submission.

During these transactions, Henry contracted a new marriage with Anne of Cleves, *A. D. 1540.* being induced by her picture, in which it seems the painter had flattered her. He found her very different from what his passion had expected, but married her from political motives. He could not, however, long bear the uneasiness of being married for life, to a woman whose corpulence, it seems, gave him disgust: he therefore resolved to have once more a divorce from his parliament, which he found it no difficult matter to obtain. Among other reasons to cancel his espousals, he declared, that he had not given an inward consent to the marriage, without which it was affirmed that his

promises could not be obligatory : he added, that as he was resolved not to consummate the marriage, and to have legitimate issue, so it was proper to give him a queen by whom he might accomplish these intentions. These reasons were thought good ; virtue and justice had long been banished from the servile parliament.

He took, for a fifth wife, Catharine Howard, the duke of Norfolk's niece : in this match he seemed to be perfectly happy, and even ordered his confessor to draw up a particular form of thanksgiving for the blessings he enjoyed in a faithful wife. The queen it seems, pretended to the same affection for him ; but, alas ! his amiable days were long over ; he was now almost choaked with fat, and had contracted a morose air, very improper for inspiring affection. The queen had actually committed those lewdnesses before marriage, of which Anna Bullen had formerly been falsely accused ; but these crimes did by no means deserve death, nor even a divorce, since her fidelity to him after marriage was all that the most scrupulous delicacy could require ; Henry, however, considered her former inconstancy as a capital offence ; and, not yet
Feb. 13, 1542.
 fatiated with blood, this queen was executed on Tower-hill.

All this was terrible, but still the king was resolved to be peculiarly cruel : though branded with three divorces, and stained with the blood of two wives, he ordered a law to be enacted, equally remarkable for its absurdity and impossibility, namely, *That whatever person knew of the intrigues of a queen, should reveal it on pain of high treason ; or if any woman, not a virgin, should presume to marry the king of England, she should be guilty of high treason ?* One would think that it were impossible to procure a

body of men capable of giving sanction to such inscrutable absurdities, and yet lay claim to reason. It was pleasantly said (for even those times of slaughter could not suppress ridicule) that the king, according to that statute, could only marry a widow. His next and last wife actually was a widow, Catharine Parr, widow of lord Latimer, *A. D.* 1543. and she was a favourer of the reformation.

She was, however, to proceed with great caution: the king prided himself much on his skill in theology, and it might be fatal to dispute with him upon religion, as she had seen in the case of one Lambert, some time before. It seems this man had denied transubstantiation, which Henry had ordered to be believed: the king, hearing that he was to be tried at Westminster for this offence, which was capital, undertook himself, to dispute the point with him in public. Letters were written to many of the bishops and nobility to be present upon this extraordinary occasion; and, on the day prefixed, there was a great concourse in the hall. Lambert stood alone without a second; the king was surrounded with a crowd of flatterers, who applauded all he said, and averred that his arguments were invincible; they extolled him above all the divines of the age, and at once confirmed his pride and his prejudices. The result of the argument was, that Lambert had his choice, either to abjure his opinions, or to be burnt as an obstinate heretick. Lambert chose to die rather than forego what he had considered as the truth, and the sentence was soon after executed in Smithfield. When his legs and thighs were burnt off, there not being fire enough to consume the rest, two of the officers, raising his body up with

their halberts, pushed it into the flames, where it was soon consumed to ashes.

It was not without reason, therefore, that the present queen concealed her sentiments, and behaved with caution; upon this account she durst not intercede for three protestants, who were burnt at Windsor just after her marriage: she once, indeed, attempted to argue with the king, but it had like to have cost her, her life; wherefore, afterwards, she suffered the divines on each side to dispute, and the executioner to destroy. During these transactions, the king would frequently assemble the houses of parliament, and harangue them with florid orations, in which he would aver, that never prince had a greater affection for his people, or was more beloved by them. In every pause of his discourse, some of his creatures, near his person, would begin to applaud: and this was followed by loud acclamations from the rest of the audience.

It is, indeed, astonishing, to what a pitch of cruelty he attained, and to what a state of servility his people: I can account for either in no other manner, than that religious disputes had now so divided the people, and set one against the other, that the king, availing himself of the universal weakness which was produced by universal dissensions, became the tyrant of all.

But nature, at last, seemed kindly willing to rid the world of a monster that man was unable to destroy. Henry had been troubled, for some time, with a disorder in his leg, which was now grown very painful; this added to his monstrous corpulency, which rendered him unable to stir, made him more furious than a chained lion: he became froward and untractable: none dared to approach

him without trembling. He had been ever stern and severe, he was now outrageous; flattery had corrupted all his senses; he deemed it an unpardonable crime to controvert those opinions which he was himself changing every hour. His courtiers, contending among themselves, and conspiring the death of each other, had no inclination to make an enemy of him. Thus he continued, for four years, the terror of all, and the tormentor of himself. At length his end approached; he perceived that he had not long to live, his fat increasing, and his leg growing worse. He had already slaughtered several favourites raised from obscure stations to share his dignities and his cruelty; Moore, Fisher, Cromwell, and others, died upon the scaffold, and Wolsey prevented it by his own death; he was resolved to make one victim more before he left the world, and that was the duke of Norfolk, who had formerly suppressed a rebellion excited against him, and who had, all along, been the vigilant minister of his commands. This nobleman had, outwardly, complied with the reformation, but, in his heart favoured the pope; the king knew this, and only wanted a pretext to put him and his son, the earl of Surry, to death. It was no difficult matter to find one: the son had used the arms of Edward the Confessor in his escutcheon, and the father had left a blank space in his own where they might be inserted. This was all the crime alledged against them, but it was sufficient when the king gave his opinion that it was his will they should die. The earl of Surry was beheaded upon Tower-hill, and a warrant was sent to the Lieutenant of the Tower to cut off the duke of Norfolk's head in two days: this sentence was just upon the point of being executed, when

the king's own death gave him an unexpected relieve. Henry had been suffered to languish without any of his domestics having the courage to warn him of his approaching end; they who had ever come near him with trembling, now dreaded to give him this friendly admonition. At length Sir Anthony Denny had the charity to inform him of his situation: he thanked this courtier for his friendly admonition, and soon after expired, full of sorrow for his former guilt, and with all the horrors of approaching dissolution.

Some sovereigns have been tyrants from contradiction and revolt, some from being misled by favourites, and some from a spirit of party; but Henry was cruel from disposition alone, cruel in the government, cruel in religion, and cruel in his family; yet, tyrant as he was, he died peaceably a natural death, while Henry VI. the most harmless of all monarchs, was dethroned, imprisoned, and assassinated. It is a folly and a wickedness to say, that good or bad actions are their own recompence here: true is the doctrine of holy writ; The wicked have their good things in this life, the virtuous must look for them in another.

Our divines have taken much pains to vindicate the character of this vicious prince, as if his conduct and our reformation were, in fact, united: nothing can be more absurd than this, as if the most noble designs were not often brought about by the most vicious instruments; we see even the cruelty and injustice of man employed in our holy redemption.

LETTER XXXII.

THE alterations, in the reign of Henry, were rather separations from the pope, than a reformation of religious abuses : in the reign of his successor Edward VI. his son by Jane *A. D.* 1546. Seymour, and heir to the crown, the errors of Rome, in reality, began to be reformed. This prince was but nine years old when he ascended the throne of his father, and the history of his government is rather a detail of the methods pursued by his governors to reform the abuses of religion, than a series of politics or war ; and their characters, rather than his, should be the object of the historian's search.

The duke of Somerset was made protector of the minority, and thus engrossed the whole administration; the rest of the council, which were joined with him, either sided with his views, or ineffectually opposed them. To strengthen his power, he marched against the Scots who had invaded England, which was their constant practice whenever they saw the country employed in faction and dispute ; a slight victory, gained by him upon this occasion, acquired him popularity and power. I have more than once remarked, that, to have gained the hearts of the English, it was requisite to be a conqueror. But to this character Somerset added virtues of a much more amiable kind : he was humble, civil, affable, courteous to the meanest suitor, and all the actions of his life were directed by motives of religion and honour : he, at the same time, had learned to look with contempt and detestation on the errors and corruptions of the church of

Rome, and was consequently the warm friend of archbishop Cranmer, who now undertook to make a real reformation, which Henry VIII. only pretended to do.

You have seen, in Henry's reign, that the only alterations he made in religion, were such as either favoured his passions, or increased his power. Thus all his subjects were under a peculiar restraint, which upon his death was no longer continued: each took the liberty of speaking his thoughts upon religion, though the laws of the last reign were still in force. In this division of opinions, as it may easily be supposed, the reformers prevailed, for they had the protector, of their party: to that end, therefore, they procured a general visitation of churches, and reformed numberless abuses that were almost held sacred by prescription. It was left to people's choice to go to confession, which had hitherto been deemed an indispensable duty, or to neglect that practice. It was ordered, that all images should be taken out of churches, priests were allowed to marry, the old mass was abolished, and a new liturgy drawn up, which retrenched several abuses in the service of the church, and which is the same with that now used, bating a few alterations.

These reformations were evidently calculated for the benefit of the subject; but still the popish clergy, who either were expelled their monasteries, or had refused to conform, stirred up the people to rise in rebellion against them. We may judge from the number of places in which insurrections were made, that those reformations were by no means received with universal satisfaction. There were, at once, insurrections in Wiltshire, Suffex, Hampshire, Kent, Gloucestershire, Suffolk, Warwickshire, Essex, Hertfordshire, Leices-

tershire, Rutlandshire, and Worcestershire; and the flames of war were rekindling through the whole kingdom. The protector, who both by principle and interest was a friend to the populace, did every thing to redress their grievances, and by that means stopped their fury for a while. In fact, they had several complaints that were founded in justice: the nobility were become possessors of the forfeit lands which belonged to the clergy, and instead of leaving them to be cultivated by the poor, as formerly, inclosed them for the purposes of pleasure and magnificence. This necessarily drove numbers, besides the ejected friars, to the utmost straits; but, to add to their misfortunes, an act was passed against them, the most severe that had hitherto been known in England: it was enacted, that, if any person should loiter, without offering himself to work, for three days together, he shall be adjudged a slave for two years to the first informer, and should be marked on the breast with the letter V, *or vagabond*, imprinted with an hot iron. It is not to be wondered at, therefore, that there should be a general insurrection of the people, when suffering such severe oppressions.

But all the protector's promises and endeavours could not effectually redress their grievances; he therefore was obliged to have recourse to violence. These were not the compact bodies of men that we have seen in former rebellions, headed by some discontented or ambitious courtier, and led on with conduct and success; Henry VII. had effectually suppressed all such; these were now only a tumultuous rabble, without arms and without discipline, led on by some obscure desperado; unreasonable in their demands, and divided among

each other: the unhappy wretches were therefore easily overthrown; above a thousand of them were slain near Exeter by lord Ruffel, and two thousand more near Norwich by the earl of Warwick.

The kingdom was now again inclining to an aristocracy: the nobility, by the late increase of their possessions, were grown powerful, and oppressed the people at pleasure. They now began to find, that they had a separate interest from that of the commons, and conspired to carry on their power by union among themselves, while the rest of the kingdom was divided. The duke of Somerset, however, opposed this project, as he was ever a favourite of the people; and it was incumbent therefore to destroy his power before they could establish their own. With this view, they placed Northumberland, at their head, and began by spreading reports to destroy the protector's reputation; they next won over the common council of London to favour their projects, and lastly had him accused of high treason. The interest of the protector was overpowered by that of his rival: *A. D. 1550.* he was condemned, and lost his head upon Tower-hill.

In all this struggle for power, the young king, by reason of his age, was barely passive: he was only made the executor of the resentment and ambition of the contending ministers, as either happened to prevail; and at one time signed the order for execution on this side, at another time on that, but ever with tears in his eyes. A tenderness of disposition was one of the amiable youth's conspicuous qualities: to these were added a sagacity far surpassing his years, and learning that amazed all such as happened to converse with him. When

the dignity of the throne was to be supported he behaved like a man; and, at other times, was gentle and affable as became his age. In short, he had such great qualities, or was said to have such, that mankind had reason to lament his short continuance among them. It is very probable, however, that flattery would have contributed to destroy those talents, as it had those of his father; for few princes, except his father, had received more flattery than he.

A. D. 1553. He died of a defluxion upon his lungs, his death being hastened by medicines given by a woman who confidently pretended she could cure him. His death made way for another scene of horrid barbarity, in which the kingdom was to be ruled by a weak and bigotted woman, who was herself ruled by merciless priests, who received their orders from the court of Rome.

LETTER XXXIII.

YOU have hitherto seen the succession to the throne of England, partly obtained by lineal descent, and partly by the aptitude for government in the person chosen: neither wholly hereditary, nor quite elective, it has ever made ancestry the pretext of right, but in fact, the consent of the people sued for the support of these pretensions. And this is the best species of succession that can be conceived; it prevents that aristocracy, which is ever the result of a government entirely elective; and that tyranny which is too often established where there is never an infringement upon hereditary claims.

Whenever a monarch of England happened to be arbitrary, he generally considered the kingdom as his property, and not himself as a servant of

the kingdom. In such cases it was natural for him, at his decease, to bequeath his dominions as he thought proper. Henry, in conformity to this practice, made a will, in which he settled the succession merely according to his usual caprice : Edward VI. was first nominated to succeed him, whose reign you have just seen ; then Mary, his eldest daughter by Catharine of Spain, but with a mark of special condescension, by which he would intimate her illegitimacy ; the next that followed was Elizabeth, his daughter by Anna Bullen, with the same marks of her not being legitimate : after his own children his sister's children were mentioned ; his youngest sister the dutchess of Suffolk's issue were preferred before his elder sister the queen of Scotland's, which preference was thought by all to be neither founded in justice, nor supported by reason.

Edward VI. as has been seen, succeeded him. He also made a will, in which he gave the kingdom away from Mary and Elizabeth to the dutchess of Suffolk's daughter, the lady Jane Grey, a girl of sixteen. By these dispositions there were, after the death of young Edward, no less than four princesses who could lay claim to the crown : Mary, who was first upon the will, had been declared illegitimate by parliament, and that act was never repealed, the same could be alledged against Elizabeth but she had another foundation by being restored to her rights in her father's reign ; the queen of Scotland, descended from Henry's eldest sister, could plead the illegitimacy of his two daughters ; and Jane Grey might allege the will of the last king in her favour.

In the last reign the Earl of Warwick was remarkable for suppressing an insurrection of the people, and afterwards for being a favourite of the

king, then made duke of Northumberland, next for overturning the duke of Somers, his rival, and at length for pursuing the measures of the man whom he had destroyed ; he now began to conceive hopes of securing the crown in his own family, and with this view matched the lord Guildford Dudley, his son, with lady Jane Grey, whom by his interest he hoped to settle on the throne. He was hated by the people for his cruelties, as much as the young lady was loved for her virtues, and this was the greatest obstacle to his design. I have been more prolix than usual upon this topic of the succession, but you should attend to it with care, in order to have a clear idea of the present and the succeeding reigns.

Immediately upon the death of the young king, but two competitors put up for the crown ; Mary, relying upon the justice of her pretensions ; and Jane Grey, supported by the duke of Northumberland, her father-in-law. Mary was strongly bigotted to the popish superstitions : having been bred up in restraint, she was reserved and gloomy : she had, even during the life of her father, the resolution to maintain her sentiments and ceremonies, and refused to comply with his new institutions ; her zeal had rendered her cruel, and she was not only blindly attached to her religious opinions, but even to the popish clergy who maintained them. On the other hand, Jane Grey was attached to the reformers : though yet but sixteen, her judgement had attained such a degree of perfection as few enjoy in their more advanced age. All historians agree, that the solidity of her understanding, improved by continual application, rendered her the wonder of her age. Ascham, tutor to Elizabeth, informs us, that, coming once to wait upon her at her father's house in Leicester-

shire, he found her reading Plato's works in Greek, when all the rest of the family were hunting in the park. He seemed surpris'd at her being the only person absent from the diversions abroad, but she assured him, that *Plato was an higher amusement to her than the most studied refinements of sensual pleasure.* It was philosophy, and not ambition, for which she seemed born : when her ambitious father-in-law came to inform her of her advancement to the throne, she heard the news with sorrow, and accepted the proffered honour with reluctance. However, the entreaties of her friends, and the authority of her husband, at length reconciled her to her fortune : she was removed to the Tower, and soon after proclaimed at London, while the people shewed few of those marks of satisfaction which usually accompany a ceremony of this kind.

Jane was proclaimed by the council, but the people were for Mary ; the men of Suffolk rose in her favour, Norfolk *July 10, 1553* soon joined her, and lord Hastings, with four thousand men, which were rais'd to oppose her, revolted to her side. - It was in vain that the duke of Northumberland attempted to lead his army against them : his soldiers deserted on the march ; he found himself abandoned ; and soon after, the council itself, which he once governed, now freed from restraint, declared against him. Jane, who had but just been crowned, now saw herself stripp'd of her dignities, and without any reluctance, laid down an honour which she was at first compelled to accept, and which she held but nine days. Her father, the duke of Suffolk, deliver'd up the Tower, of which he had the command ; and her father-in-law, the duke of Northumberland being prevented from flying out of the kingdom, pretended to

be pleased at Mary's success, and was the first to fling the cap when she was proclaimed in Cambridge.

Mary now entered London, and, without the least effusion of blood, saw herself joyfully proclaimed, and peaceably settled on the throne. This was a juncture that seemed favourable to British happiness and liberty; a queen, whose rights were the most equitable, in some measure elected by the people: the aristocracy of the last reign almost wholly suppressed; the house of commons, by their means, reinstated in their former authority; the pride of the clergy humbled, and their vices detected; together with peace abroad, and almost unanimity at home. This was the flattering prospect upon Mary's accession, but soon this pleasing phantom was dissolved: Mary was cruel and a bigot; she gave back their former power to her clergy, and the kingdom was, once more, involved in the horrors from whence it had lately been extricated.

The queen had promised to the men of Suffolk, who first declared in her favour, that she would suffer religion to remain in the situation in which she found it. This promise, however, she by no means intended to perform. Political cruelty ever precedes religious. She had resolved on a change of religion; but before she persecuted heretics, who were as yet her friends, it was necessary to get rid of some of the late council, who were, in reality, her enemies. The duke of Northumberland was the first object of royal vengeance; and not indeed without reason. It is instructive enough to observe the vicissitudes of fortune: the duke of Norfolk was now taken from his prison in the

Tower, to sit as judge upon the duke of Northumberland, who had kept him there. The accused made a very skilful defence, but what could that avail in a court predetermined to condemn him? He was capitally convicted, and soon after executed; Sir John Gates, and Sir Thomas Palmer, who had assisted in his projects, shared in his punishment.

While these were falling as victims to their ambition, the queen's ministers were, in the mean time, carrying on a negotiation of marriage, between her and Philip, king of Spain. The people thought they saw that this would be a fatal blow to their liberties, and therefore loudly murmured against it; but when they found the treaty actually concluded, they could no longer contain. Sir Thomas Wyatt, a Roman Catholic, at the head of four thousand insurgents, marched from Kent to Hyde-Park, and entered the city in hopes of securing the Tower, but his rashness undid him; as he passed through the narrow streets care was taken by the earl of Pembroke, to block up the way behind him, by fortifications thrown across the streets, and guards were placed at all the avenues to prevent his return. This unhappy man passed boldly forward, and was now ready to reap the fruits of his undertaking, when, to his astonishment, he found that he could neither proceed nor yet make a good retreat. He now, too late, perceived his own temerity, and, losing all courage in the exigency, he surrendered at discretion. In the mean time, the duke of Suffolk had endeavoured to foment the insurrection, but without success; he was taken prisoner also, and destined for the common slaughter. Accordingly, Wyatt, the duke of Suffolk, Sir John Throgmorton, and fifty-

eight more, were executed; but what raised the compassion of the people most of all was the execution of lady Jane Gray, and her husband Guilford Dudley, who were involved in this calamity.

Two days after Wyat was taken, lady Jane and her husband were ordered to prepare for death; lady Jane, who had long before seen the threatened blow, was no way surpris'd at the message, but bore it with heroic resolution: and, being informed that she had three days to prepare for death, she seem'd displeas'd at so long a delay. Guilford Dudley was the first that suffer'd. As the lady was conducted to execution, the officers of the Tower met her on the way, bearing the headless body of her husband, streaming with blood, in order to be interred in the chapel in the Tower: she look'd on the corpse without trembling, and only, with a sigh desired to proceed. She testified, to the last moment of her sufferings, great constancy, great piety, and an immoveable adherence to the reformation. This was the third queen who died by the hands of the executioner in England.

The enemies of the state being thus suppress'd, the theatre was now opened for the pretended enemies of religion. The queen was freed from all apprehensions of an insurrection, and therefore began by assembling a corrupt parliament, which was to countenance her future cruelties. The nobility, whose only religion seem'd that of the prince who govern'd, were easily gain'd over, and the house of commons seem'd passive in all her proceedings. She began by giving orders for the suppression of married bishops and priests: the mass was directed to be restored: the pope's authority was re-establish'd, with some restrictions;

the laws against heretics were renewed; and the church and its privileges put upon the same foundation in which they were before the alterations of Henry VIII.

This was kindling up the fires of persecution anew: at the head of these measures were Gardiner, bishop of Winchester, and Bonner, bishop of London. Poole, the pope's legate, a great part of whose life was spent in Italy, seemed too much civilized in that country, then the most polite in Europe, to be accessory to the measures now pursued. Gardiner began this bloody scene with Hooper and Rogers: Hooper had been bishop of Gloucester; Rogers was a clergyman who had shone amongst the most distinguished of the protestants. He was prebendary of St. Paul's, and refused all submission to the church of Rome, which he looked upon as antichristian. They were condemned by commissioners appointed

A. D. 1555.

by the queen, with the chancellor at the head of them. Rogers suffered in Smithfield. When he was brought to the stake, he had it in his power to save himself, by recanting his opinions; but neither hopes nor fears could prevail upon him to desert his religion. When the faggots were placed around him, he seemed no way daunted at the preparations, but cried out, *I resign my life with joy, in testimony of the doctrine of Jesus.* Hooper had his pardon offered him upon the same terms, but he refused it with equal indignation. This old martyr, who was executed at Gloucester, was three quarters of an hour in torment; the fire, either from malice or neglect, had not been sufficiently kindled, so that his legs and thighs were first burnt, and one of his hands dropped off before he expired.

Saunders and Taylor, two other clergymen, whose zeal had been distinguished in carrying on the reformation, were the next that suffered. Taylor was put into a pitch barrel, and, before the fire was kindled, a faggot from an unknown hand was thrown at his head, which made it stream with blood; still, however, he continued undaunted, singing the xxxist psalm in English, which one of the spectators observing, hit him a blow on the side of the head, and commanded him to pray in Latin: he then continued a few minutes silent, only with his eyes stedfastly fixed upon heaven, when one of the guards, either thro' impatience or compassion, struck him down with his halbert, and thus delivered him from a world of pain to a life of immortal happiness.

The death of these only served to increase the savage appetite of the monks and popish bishops for fresh slaughter. Bonner, bloated at once with rage and luxury, let loose his vengeance without restraint; while the queen, by letters, exhorted him to pursue the pious work without pity or interruption: and now Ridley, bishop of London, and the venerable Latimer, bishop of Worcester, were to receive the martyr's crown. Ridley was one of the ablest champions of the reformation; his piety, learning and solidity of judgement, were admired by his friends and dreaded by his enemies. The night before his execution he invited the mayor of Oxford and his wife to see him die; and, when he saw them melted into tears, he himself appeared quite unmoved, heaven being his secret supporter and comforter in this hour of agony. When he came to the stake where he was to be burned, he found his old friend Latimer there be-

fore him, and begun to comfort him in his sufferings, while Latimer was as ready to return the kind office. A furious bigot ascended to preach to them, before the execution of their sentence: Ridley gave a serious attention to the sermon, and offered to answer it, but this he was not allowed to do. At length the fire was set to the pile; Latimer was soon out of his pain; but Ridley continued much longer, his legs being consumed before the fire reached his vitals.

Cranmer, whom you have seen already so zealous in the reformation, was the next personage of note that was burnt; he had this peculiar aggravation of his calamity, *A. D. 1556.* that he was prevailed upon to abjure his principles, and sign his recantation, by the hopes of pardon. Being, notwithstanding this brought to the stake, his confusion and shame were there inexpressible: there he retracted all that their false promises had made him abjure; and resolving that the hand which had signed should first suffer, he held it out with an intrepid countenance, in the flames, till it dropped off, frequently crying out, in the midst of his agony, *that unworthy hand!*

Bonner now seemed satisfied, not with single deaths, but sent men in whole companies to the flames: women themselves were not spared. But the cruelty went yet further: a woman, condemned for heresy, was delivered of a child in the midst of the flames; some of the spectators humanely snatched it out; the magistrate who was a papist, ordered it to be flung in again, and it was there consumed with the mother. The perpetrators of such actions were no longer human; they must have forfeited all pretensions to the name, for hell itself could be guilty of nothing more atrocious.

But they were not content with punishing the living alone, their vengeance extended even to the dead; Bucer and Fagius, two German divines, who had been dead some years before, were cited, very formally, to appear and give an account of their faith; in default of their appearance, their bodies were taken from their graves, and being hung upon a gallows were consumed to ashes. The wife of Peter Martyr, who himself had the prudence to escape, was dug up like the former, and buried in a dung-hill. In short the persecutions of the priests and friars went such lengths, that the very magistrates, who had at first been instruments of their cruelty, at last refused to assist at the punishing heretics for the future, till a court, somewhat resembling the inquisition, was established, which continued the slaughter without remorse. In this reign five bishops, twenty-one ministers, and above eight hundred others, went to the flames in maintainance of the truth; numbers died in prison, and several by whips and tortures were forced to abjure.

Yet still in this dismal situation with respect to religion, the temporal concerns of the nation were conducted with very little better success. Calais, which had long been possessed by the English, and was a curb to the ambition of France, was taken in this reign by the duke of Guise, and all the English driven out of it, as the great Edward had driven the French out two hundred years before. The queen was only bent in ruining protestants, and took no care to defend her dominions.

Philip, her husband seemed no way pleased with his alliance. The queen, some time after their marriage, was delivered of a false conception. This created disgust in him; he therefore quitted Eng-

land to pursue his own schemes in Flanders, leaving the queen sufficiently mortified at his coldness, of which he gave repeated proofs. *A. D. 1557.*

The loss of Calais, and the disappointment with regard to her pregnancy, soon excited murmurs among the people. The protestants now exerted their influence in exposing the weakness of the government and the cruelty of the council; but no person had a greater share of reproach than the queen, and none felt it so severely. The house of commons, that had hitherto been all along so submissive, now also testified their displeasure, and refused to grant a subsidy, though she condescended to lay the bad state of her affairs before them. During these mortifications her health sensibly declined: she was naturally melancholy and fullen, and her repeated disappointments increased her distemper. She had been ill attended during her pretended pregnancy, having committed herself to the care of women, and neglected the advice of her physicians. After having been for some time afflicted with the dropsy, this disorder carried her off in the forty third year of her age, after a reign of about five years. Had she been born at any other period, she might have been a good princess, but her zeal for religion was louder than the calls of humanity. Henry VIII. her father, acted like a tyrant and a persecutor from vicious motives, and he knew it: Mary was both a tyrant and a persecutor from motives of virtue, and she was never undeceived.

LETTER XXXIV.

WERE we to adopt the maxim of some, that evil may be done for the production of good, one might say, that the persecutions in Mary's reign were permitted only to bring the kingdom over to the protestant religion. Nothing could preach so effectually against the cruelty and the vices of the monks, as the actions of the monks themselves: wherever heretics were to be burnt, they were always present, rejoicing at the spectacle, insulting the fallen, and frequently the first to thrust the flaming brand against the faces of the condemned. The English were effectually converted by such sights as these. To bring any people over to any opinion, it is only necessary to persecute instead of attempting to convince. The people had formerly embraced the reformed religion from fear; they were now internally protestants from inclination.

We have hitherto seen England, like the element that surrounds it, ever unsettled and stormy: ever sinking under foreign invasion or domestic disputes: it had felt a short interval of happiness, indeed, under Henry VII. but his successors soon disturbed that felicity, and laid the country once more in blood. At length the genius of the people prevailed over all opposition, and England was now about to make its own happiness, and to set mankind an example of industry, commerce, freedom, learning, opulence, and power.

To Mary succeeded her sister Elizabeth, who was *Jan. 15, 1558.* unanimously declared queen at the accustomed places, and with the acclamations of the people. Elizabeth had her education in that best of schools, the school of ad-

versity. As during the life of her sister, who had no children, she was next heir to the throne, and at the same time was known to be of the protestant religion, she was obnoxious to the reigning tyrant, for two reasons: it was feared she might aspire to the throne during her sister's life; but it was still more reasonably apprehended, that she would, if ever she came to the crown, make an innovation in that religion which Mary took so much pains to establish. The bishops, who had shed such a deluge of blood, foresaw this, and often told Mary, that her destroying meaner heretics was of no advantage to the state, unless she attacked the principal heretic; and it was to no purpose to lop off the branches while the body of the tree was suffered to stand. Mary saw and acknowledged the justice of their observations, confined her sister with proper guards, and only waited for some new insurrection, or some favourable pretext to destroy her: her own death prevented the perpetration of her meditated cruelty, and Elizabeth was taken from a prison to be fixed upon a throne.

Elizabeth had made the proper use of her confinement; being debarred the enjoyment of pleasures abroad, she sought for knowledge at home; she cultivated her understanding, learned the languages and sciences; but, of all the arts in which she excelled, her arts of keeping fair, with her sister, of not offending the papists, of being in esteem with the protestants, of dissembling and learning to reign, were the greatest.

This virgin monarch, whose memory England still reverts with gratitude and respect, was scarce proclaimed queen, when Philip of Spain, who had been married to Mary, but who ever testified an inclination for Elizabeth, sought her in mar-

riage. What political motives Elizabeth might have against this match is uncertain ; but certain it is, she neither liked the person nor the religion of her admirer : she was willing at once to enjoy the pleasure of independance and the vanity of numerous solicitations.

She had ever resolved upon reforming the church, even in the restraints of a prison : and upon coming to the throne, she immediately set about that great design. The people were now almost wholly of the protestant religion ; the ill use the papists had made of their power, in the last reign, had totally undone their cause : a religion marked with cruelty, tyranny and persecution, was not a religion for the people of England. She began, therefore in imitation of the deceased queen, to forbid all meddling with controversy in the pulpit, and all innovations of the established rights, except that the service should be performed in the vulgar tongue, till a parliament should determine the proper modes of worship. The parliament soon met, and the reformation was finished, and religion established in the manner we enjoy it at present.

The opposition which was made to these religious establishments was but weak : a conference of nine doctors on each side was proposed and agreed to : they were to dispute publicly upon either side of the question, and it was resolved that the people should hold to that which came off with victory.

A. D. 1561. Disputations of this kind are never attended with conviction to either party ; so much is to be said on either side, and so wide is the field that both sides have to range in, that each generally loses his strength in vain preparations, and ineffectual prefacing, before he is properly said to begin the engagement. The conference, therefore,

came to nothing ; the Papists declared, that it was not in their power to dispute a second time upon topics in which they had gained a former victory under queen Mary ; and the protestants ascribed their caution to their fears. Of nine thousand four hundred beneficed clergymen, which were in the whole kingdom, only fourteen bishops, twelve archdeacons, fifteen heads of colleges, and about eighty of the parochial clergy, chose to quite their preferments rather than their religion. Thus England changed its belief in religion four times since Henry VIII. Strange, says a foreign writer, that a people, who are so resolute, should be guilty of so much inconsistency ! that the same people, who this day publicly burnt heretics, should the next, not only think them guiltless, but conform to their opinions !

Elizabeth was now fixed upon a Protestant throne, while all the neighbouring nations were open or secret enemies ; France, Scotland, Spain, the pope, were all combined against her : her subjects of Ireland were concealed enemies, and the catholic party in England, though not so numerous as formerly, was not yet entirely suppressed : these were the dangers she had to fear, nor had she one friend to assist her upon an emergency. In this situation, therefore she could hope for no other resource, but what proceeded from the affection of her own subjects, and the wisdom of her administration. To make herself beloved by the people, and, at the same time, feared by her courtiers, were the governing maxims of her conduct. She was frugal of the public treasure, and still more sparing in her rewards to her favourites : this at once kept the people in spirits, and kept the great too poor to shake off lawful subjection. She distributed

both rewards and punishments with impartiality; knew when to flatter, and when to upbraid; could dissemble submission, but preserve her prerogatives: in short, she seemed to have studied the people she was to govern, and often to have flattered their follies in order to secure their hearts.

Her chief minister was Robert Dudley, son to the late duke of Northumberland, whom the queen seemed to regard from capricious motives, as he had neither abilities nor virtue; but, to make amends, the two favourites next in power were Bacon and Cecil, men of great capacity and infinite application. They regulated the finances, and directed the political measures, that were followed with so much success.

Mary Stewart, queen of France and Scotland, gave the first alarm to this state of tranquillity, by taking the title of queen of England; and her cause was supported by the popish faction, which still wanted to make new disturbances. The throne of Elizabeth was not yet perfectly fixed, and the intrigues of religion could still overturn it: she, therefore, was not remiss in sending an army into Scotland, and forcing the French troops out of that kingdom, by a treaty signed to that effect. Soon after, the king of France died, and Elizabeth forced her rival to renounce the title of queen of England, which she had assumed. She went yet still further; she encouraged the parliament of Scotland to introduce the reformation into that country; her intrigues succeeded, and she thus gained over a stedfast friend in the Scots, from whom the English had, till then, only received repeated marks of enmity and ill-will.

This tempest was scarce allayed, when Philip of Spain gave new alarms. As long as he had fears from the power of the queen of Scots, by her union with France, he was still attached to Elizabeth, but when, by the death of the king of France her husband, she was again reduced to her primitive weakness, his jealousy then began to fall upon Elizabeth. With this view he encouraged the insurrections and discontents in Ireland, and Elizabeth with equal care suppressed them. He supported, in France, a league made to exclude the royal family from the throne; Elizabeth protected the opposite side. He oppressed the people of Holland with cruelty and injustice; Elizabeth supported them from sinking under his power. Thus, on every side, she warded off the dangers that threatened her, and soon after, in her turn, prepared to act offensively against her enemies.

But the care of war did not repress her assiduity in the administration of justice at home: she was resolved to shew the Roman Catholic party an example of moderation, which they might admire but could not imitate. The monks, who were dispossessed of their monasteries, had been assigned pensions, which were to be paid by the possessors of the forfeited lands. These payments were entirely neglected, and those unhappy men, who had been educated in solitude and ignorance, were now starving in old age, too much disregarded by the Protestants, and too numerous to find relief from those of their own persuasion. Elizabeth ordered that their pensions should be paid with punctuality and justice, and satisfaction made for all arrears unjustly detained.

In order the more to ingratiate herself with the people, she visited Cambridge and Oxford, and made each a Latin speech, and shewed, by her discourse and conduct a regard for those seminaries of learning, which had been suppressed by her father.

She not only affected this obliging carriage to her inferiors, but also behaved in something of a romantic strain to the courtiers next her person. The gallantries of the court were conducted according to the rules of chivalry ; every damsel had her knight : Dudley, who was now become earl of Leicester, was generally the queen's ; but all writers agree, that her passion for him never proceeded beyond the bounds of Platonic affection. When her commons, in a dutiful manner, represented to her how much the safety of the kingdom depended upon her marrying, she thanked them in an obliging manner, and assured them she was now become the wife of her people, and would be pleased at having inscribed on her tomb, That having reigned with equity, she lived and died a virgin.

LETTER XXXV.

THE ancient ferocity of the English was not yet quite reclaimed : the barbarous method of fixing the monarch upon the throne, by executions performed upon the scaffold, was not quite done away, the only difference seemed to be, that formerly, those who were obnoxious to the crown, fell without any legal trial ; but now they fell with all the forms, yet all the severity of justice.

While Elizabeth was thus attempting to settle religion, to establish the power, and humble the enemies of her country, she at the same time was guilty of some instances of cruelty, which though coloured with the pretext of law, could only be the effect of the yet uncivilized disposition of the times. The catholics held meetings to restore their religion by open force: the countess of Lenox, Arthur Poole, and others, began to form factions in the kingdom; their plottings, however, were discovered, and, upon their own confession, they were condemned; but the queen, in consideration of their illustrious descent, forgave their offence. A sister of the late Jane Grey, however, though less guilty, met with less clemency: she had married the earl of Pembroke, without leave from the court: this was considered as an high offence, and the earl and she were committed to the Tower. After a long imprisonment he was obliged to forsake her: and she, loaded with the misfortune, died in confinement.

But this only prepared the way for a cruelty of a more heinous nature, which gave the world a disagreeable remembrance of the transactions committed in the reign of her father. Mary queen of Scots, had long renounced her title to the crown of England, but not her claim of succeeding to the throne: this renunciation, however, being extorted from her by Elizabeth, Mary took every method of disturbing her in the quiet possession of the crown, and yet gave every mark of reconciliation and sincere amity. There were, in fact, many circumstances to contribute to their mutual dislike; the jealousy of neighbouring crowns, the opposition of religion, of wit, and of beauty; Mary, less powerful, less absolute, less politic, was, however,

Elizabeth's superior in personal charms, and this alone served to enflame their animosity. The queen of Scotland encouraged the catholic faction in England, while Elizabeth, with still more success, fomented the protestant party among the Scots. Mary had now, for some time, thoughts of marrying a second husband, after the death of the French King; Elizabeth, on the other hand, who had no thoughts of marriage herself, strove, by every art, to prevent this marriage, as she considered that it would be strengthening the power of her rival. With this view, she wrote Mary a letter, in which, after many insincere protestations of friendship, she begged that Mary would not offer to marry till her consent should first be obtained. This unreasonable request not a little disturbed the queen of Scotland, but fearing to offend her potent rival, she pretended to comply: in secret, however, she was resolved to marry the earl of Darnly, her relation, who had the merit of being a catholic like herself: but, perhaps, whose greatest recommendation was the size of his person, which was large and comely. The party gained by Elizabeth in Scotland, tried every measure to prevent her design. It was agitated, whether the queen could marry without the consent of the states: several of the nobility rose in arms to prevent it: the ambassadors of England made daily remonstrances upon its impropriety, but all in vain: Mary to cut short their proceedings, had the marriage solemnized in her own chapel, and banished the opposers by a solemn act of the states.

A. D. 1565. All hitherto appeared fortunate for Mary; her enemies banished, her rival defeated, and herself married to the man she loved; yet this was but a flattering calm: for soon, whether from the capri-

ciousness of her temper, or from what other cause I will not pretend to determine, lord Darnly, notwithstanding the elegance of his person, became entirely disagreeable to her. She had conceived such an aversion to him, that it was soon obvious, even to the people; and she took every method to mortify him in the eyes of the public. Her vices were the cause of all her misfortunes: there was at that time in her court one David Rizzio, the son of a musician at Turin, who had followed the ambassador from that court into Scotland. As he understood music to perfection, and sung a good bass, he was introduced into the queen's concert, who was so taken with him, that she desired the ambassador, upon his departure, to leave Rizzio behind. The excellence of his voice soon procured him greater familiarities; the queen loved him, confided in him, and ever kept him next her person. The new king, who only had the name, could not without jealousy, see this insinuating foreigner receive all the queen's favours, while he was treated only with contempt. Stung at once with envy, rage, and resentment, he at length resolved to murder the man he could not equal, and consulted with some lords about the method of accomplishing his cruel design. Men in power ever find accomplices in their guilt; two other lords and he settled it, that the murder should be committed before the face of the queen, as a punishment for her scandalous conduct. Thus prepared, they were informed that Rizzio was, at that very instant in the queen's chamber; lord Darnly led the way, conducting the assassins up by a private stair-case, and entered the queen's chamber, who was at table with her favourite Rizzio. Darnly

stood for some time leaning upon the back of her chair. His fierce looks, and unexpected intrusion, in some measure alarmed the queen, who, however, kept silence, not daring to call out: a little after lord Ruthven, one of the murderers, and George Douglass, entered abruptly, all in arms, and attended with more of their accomplices. The queen could no longer refrain, but asked the reason of this bold intrusion; Ruthven made her no answer, but ordered Rizzio to quit a place of which he was unworthy. Rizzio now saw that he was the object of their vengeance, and, trembling with fear, took hold of the queen's robes to put himself under her protection, who, on her part strove to interpose between the assassins and him; Douglass, in the mean, had reached the unfortunate Rizzio, and taking a dagger from the king's side, drew it, and while the queen filled the room with her cries, he plunged it in her presence, into Rizzio's bosom. She was five months gone with child, and this horrid scene had such an effect upon the fruit of her womb, that it is said her child, who was afterwards king James I. could never venture to look upon a drawn sword without shuddering. Thus ended Rizzio, a man who has been more spoken of, than perhaps any other who rose from so mean a station. What his other talents to please might have been, is unknown; but certain it is, that several indications of his skill in music remain even to the present time: all those pleasing Scotch airs, which are set in such a peculiar taste, being universally allowed to be of his composition.

This was but a temporary check upon Mary's power; she resumed her authority, by the influence of her charms upon the earl her husband, who

gave up the murderers of Rizzio to her resentment ; but they had previously escaped into England. One criminal engagement, however, was scarcely got over when Mary fell into a second: the earl of Bothwell now began to hold the same place in her affections that Rizzio had formerly possessed. This new amour was attended with still more terrible consequences than the former ; her husband fell a victim to it. His life was first attempted by poison, but the strength of his constitution saved him, for a short time, only to fall by a more violent death: he was strangled by night, the house in which the fact was committed being blown up with gun-powder, in order to persuade the people that his death was accidental ; but his shirt not being singed, and his slippers found near him, together with blue marks round his neck, soon confirmed the suspicion of his real murder. His body was buried near that of Rizzio, among the Scottish kings.

All orders of the state, the whole body of the people, accused Bothwell of this assassination, and at last demanded justice upon him from the queen, for the late murder, openly arraigning him of the guilt. In this universal demand for justice, the queen, deaf to the murmurs of her people, deaf to the voice of decency, married the murderer of her husband, and prevailed upon him to divorce his former wife to make way for this fatal alliance.

Bothwell was possessed of all the insolence which attends great crimes : he assembled the principal lords of the state, and compelled them to sign an instrument, purporting, *that they judged it the queen's interest to marry Bothwell, as he had lain with her against her will.* These transactions excited the whole kingdom of Scotland to resistance, and Mary,

abandoned by her followers, was obliged to give herself up as a prisoner to the confederacy. Bothwell fled to the Orkney islands. The queen, being confined in Lochleven castle, was compelled to resign the crown to her son, as yet a child; but she was permitted to nominate a regent. She turned her eyes upon the earl of Murray, who was then in France, and appointed him, expecting that he would defend her cause, and restore her. In this however she was entirely mistaken; Murray upon his arrival, instead of comforting her, as he formerly used, loaded her with reproaches, which reduced her almost to despair. The calamities of the great, however justly deserved, excite pity and create friends; an army of forty thousand men declared in her favour, and she escaped from prison to put herself at their head. But this was only to encounter new misfortunes; she was met by a body of but four thousand men, commanded by the new regent, and was totally defeated. To avoid falling into the hands of her enemies, she fled towards the borders of England. Elizabeth, being informed of her misfortunes and her retreat, at first granted her an honourable reception, and ordered her to be lodged at a gentleman's house, where she was treated with fitting dignity. Notwithstanding this kindness, she refused to see her until she had justified herself from the reproaches with which she was branded. By this means Elizabeth in a manner declared herself umpire of the differences between the two parties; and each accordingly pleaded their cause before her; Mary by her emissaries, and Murray the regent, in person. It was the queen of England's duty to protect, and not to examine, her royal fugitive: however, she lengthened out the pleadings on both

sides, and enjoyed the pleasure of seeing her rival humbled, without passing any definitive sentence. Mary privately complained of her unworthy treatment and long delay; these complaints were carried to Elizabeth, which ended in the queen of Scots being sent a prisoner to Tutbury castle.

The disasters of the crown of Scotland fell upon the people, divided as they were into factions, and animated with mutual animosity. The regent, attempting to quell them, was himself slain, and the assassins, pretending to act in the name of their imprisoned queen, made an incursion into England, and committed some ravages on the frontier-counties. Elizabeth with an army quickly repressed these invaders, and procured the earl of Lenox, father to the late king, to be elected in his room. In the mean time, while she was employed in bringing Scotland to measures, she found herself attacked, in her own dominions, by a conspiracy. The pope, in order to assist the rebels, procured a bull to be fixed up in several places in London, whereby he excommunicated Elizabeth, and absolved her subjects from their oaths of allegiance. This bull was fixed up by John Felton, grand uncle to him whom we are shortly to see act another desperate part. John Felton, when he was told that the government was in pursuit of him, disdained to fly: he waited with intrepidity till he was taken, and then boldly confessed the fact with which he was charged, and gloried in the commission: he might have received pardon upon acknowledging his crime, but he refused it, and was hanged near the place, meeting death with a resolution that astonished even the brave. What noble actions might not such a mind

have been capable of, had it first received a right direction.

These efforts, in favour of the queen of Scots, only served to hasten her ruin. The two queens entered into various negotiations and frivolous treaties ; the one attempting to humble her prisoner, the other, with fruitless pride, attempting to preserve the lustre of fallen majesty. Scotland, in the mean time, streamed with blood : the papists and the protestants carried on a civil war. The archbishop of St. Andrews, one of the warmest partizans of Mary was taken in arms, and executed upon the deposition of his confessor, who swore that this prelate had privately confessed that he was an accomplice in the murder of Darnly.

The greatest misfortunes of Mary rather proceeded from her friends than enemies. The duke of Norfolk, who professed a friendship for her, expected by her means, to rise to the British throne : he therefore, privately negociated a marriage with her, and she on the other hand, attempted to break off that which she had already contracted with Bothwell. He formed a party in London, feeble indeed ; but he expected assistance from the intrigues of the pope, and the arms of Spain. He himself was a weak man, and his plots were but shallow ; the spies of Elizabeth discovered them all : he was arrested, accused, condemned, and executed. This nobleman's blood only contributed to fasten the chains of the unfortunate Mary : yet still she conceived hopes from foreign alliances, which seldom are of any weight in domestic disputes. She had the league in France in her favour, the pope, the Spaniards, and the Jesuits ; she not only hoped to be reinstated in her former power, but to have the crown of England,

to which she laid claim as her birth-right, added to her own. In pursuance of these designs, a new conspiracy was formed, fourteen of the conspirators executed, and, last of all, Mary was brought to a trial, before a queen who had no other right to be her judge but that of power. Forty-two members of parliament, and five judges, were sent to examine her in prison: she protested against their right, yet made a defence; they had originally no foundation in justice to try her, and they carried on their accusation with only a shew of equity. In short after an imprisonment of eighteen years, this unhappy princess was brought to the block, and beheaded in one of the rooms of her prison, which had been hung in black *A. D. 1587.* for the occasion. This action stained the reign of Elizabeth with such colours, that neither her dissimulation, nor the prosperity of her reign, could ever wash away: her subjects, while they found themselves happy, attempted to excuse her conduct, but conscience internally condemned her cruelty, and time, that speaks plain, at last declares her guilt. In treating the actions of mankind, we almost ever find both sides culpable and so it was here: Mary, who was a murderer and adulteress, died by the orders of Elizabeth, who was at once cruel and unjust.

LETTER XXXVI.

THE constitution of England took a long series of years to settle into form, nor even yet was its structure entirely completed: the monarchs still preserved a degree of ancient pride, and often were guilty of injustice and tyranny, without being called

to an account. Had the actions of Elizabeth, which are now the subject of our praise, been performed by one of our present monarchs, they would be sufficient to cause his expulsion. There is something lucky in every great reign, like this in view: its lustre is rather owing to the indifferent periods that preceded it, than to its own intrinsic value. Elizabeth left her kingdom, it must be owned, in a better state than she found it; but her actions should be neither the subject of our praise, nor the object of our imitation.

We see a mixture of cruelty and gallantry in all the transactions of these times: while Elizabeth, was thus plotting the death of Mary, she was, at the same time employed in a treaty of marriage with the young duke of Anjou. This, however, came to nothing, the queen resolving to enjoy that power uncontrouled, which her subjects had not yet learned to abridge.

But, though she disliked an husband, yet none more passionately desired to have a lover. It is thought, indeed, her affections were confined to Platonic wishes only, and her age, for she now began to decline, seemed to favour the supposition; but the choice of her favourites countenanced the contrary report, and her sorrow for the earl of Leicester, who died about this time, confirmed it. But one favourite always made room for another, and Devereux, earl of Essex, succeeded Dudley, earl of Leicester. This nobleman was young, active, ambitious, witty and handsome: in the field and at court he ever appeared with superior lustre. In all the masques which were then performed, the earl and Elizabeth were generally coupled as partners; and, though she was almost sixty, and he not

half so old, yet flattery had taught her to forget the disparity of age: the world told her she was still beautiful and young, and she was inclined to think so. The young earl's interest in the queen's heart, as may naturally be expected, promoted his interests in the state: he conducted all things without a rival, and, wherever he went, he acquired a degree of unbounded popularity. Young and unexperienced as he was, he at length began to fancy the applause of the people given to his merits, and not to his favour: thus possessed of a false opinion of his own security, to use the words of the poet, he kicked down the ladder by which he rose; he began to despise the queen, and was heard to drop some expressions, that he thought her, in spite of flattery, both old and ugly. Her remonstrances, on this occasion, were such as might have been expected from a disappointed girl, very angry, yet wishing for a vindication. She gave him, in a passion, a box on the ear, pardoned him, employed him: he again transgressed, and she again pardoned the offence. Secure in her affections, he at length proceeded to actual disobedience: his former favour had gained him enemies, his present insolence lost him the friendship of the queen; he was condemned to retirement, when he might have been capitally convicted. He now came to a sense of his misconduct, and was resolved to try the long unpractised arts that had first brought him into favour. Immediately after sentence, when he was preparing for retirement in the country, he first assured the queen, that he could never be happy till he again saw those eyes which were used to shine upon him with such lustre; that, in expectance of that happy moment, like another

Nebuchadnezzar, he would dwell with the beasts of the field, and be wet with the dew of heaven, till she again propitiously took pity on his sufferings. This romantic message seemed peculiarly pleasing to the queen; she thought him sincere from the consciousness of her own sincerity: she replied, that, after some time, when convinced of his humility, something perhaps might be expected from her lenity. This hope of pardon made him think slightly of his guilt: his pride once more increasing with his success, he laid designs of destroying his rivals in power, and securing the person of the queen. With this resolution, he imprisoned the queen's messengers, headed a few malecontents, and marched through the city, exhorting the citizens to arms, and crying out, For the queen! for the queen! During a long march, not one citizen thought proper to join him, though numbers led by curiosity, ran to see him pass by. In this disappointment, word was brought that he was proclaimed a traitor; upon which he made one effort more to excite an insurrection, but without success; he therefore now resolved to return to his own house, but found the street secured by a great chain and a guard of soldiers. As he saw no other way to force his passage, but by an attack upon the guards, he immediately fell on, attended by his followers, but was beat back and wounded in the thigh. He then went down to the water-side, and putting himself and his retinue on board small boats, he escaped to his house, which he fortified in the best manner he could. The house was soon invested by the lord Admiral, and the earl and his followers were obliged to deliver themselves up; the earl of Southampton was a companion in his guilt, and

his misfortunes; they were soon after brought to their trials and condemned to die. When the day of his death came, the queen appeared irresolute; she sent an order to stop the execution, and soon after ordered it to proceed. However romantic it may seem, she felt in her bosom all the fluctuations of love and resentment, and was irresolute which passion to obey; her resentment, at last prevailed; he was executed six days after his sentence, and died with penitence *A. D. 1600* and resolution.

Thus died a favourite who had merits, but did not owe his rise to them: he was gallant, romantic, and ostentatious: his genius for shows, and those pleasures that carry an image of war, was as remarkable as his spirit in the profession itself; and, had he been possessed of humility equal to his abilities, he at last might have mounted a throne instead of a scaffold. The queen, at first, carried her resentment so far, as to have a sermon preached at St. Paul's cross to blacken his memory: his haughty behaviour, and unguarded expressions, had entirely alienated her affections, and imprinted an asperity, which, it seems, even his death could not soften.

With the death of this favourite, Elizabeth's pleasures seemed to expire; she afterwards went through the business of the state merely from habit, but her happiness was no more. Historians are fond of representing all their characters without passion, and to give to every action of the great either political or rational motives; they therefore treat this queen's affection as a fable: but many of the actions of her life appear dictated by resentment or regard, nor ever had woman a greater variety of caprice: the great feel as the rest of mankind,

and her passions were particularly violent and lasting. She lived but a short time after the death of Essex, and had the mortification of being forsaken by most of her courtiers before she died, who now strove to court the favour of king James, whom she had appointed her successor. She died in the *A. D.* 1603. seventieth year of her age, and the forty-fifth of her reign. Her character differed with her circumstances; in the beginning of her reign she was moderate and humble, towards the end haughty and severe: she was indebted to her good fortune that her ministers were excellent, but it was owing to her want of wisdom, that her favourites, who were chosen more immediately by herself were unworthy. Tho' she was possessed of excellent sense, yet she never had the discernment to discover that she wanted beauty: to flatter her charms, even at the age of sixty-five, was the surest way of gaining her interest and esteem. She was greater in her public than in her private character, and they most disliked and feared her who were placed next her person. But, whatever might have been the queen's character, the character of her people, at that period, demands our praise and imitation. Permit me to reserve that glorious picture of genius struggling to get free from barbarity, to the succeeding letter.

LETTER XXXVII.

WHATEVER punishments or cruelties were exerted in this reign, they mostly fell upon the great; but never was the people of England more happy internally, or more formidable abroad, than during this period. The vices and virtues of a nation are often wholly ascribed to the monarch who

rules them ; but such influence extends only to a narrow sphere ; no single reign, however good, nor indeed any succession of virtuous reigns, can give happiness, morals, and arts, a general spread, unless the people be pre-disposed for the reception. From Nerva to Antoninus, what a noble succession of Roman Emperors ! and yet, even under them, Rome was declining fast into barbarity. It was not owing to Elizabeth alone that England enjoyed all its present happiness : the people, as if spontaneously, began to exert their native vigour, and every art and every genius put forth all their powers.

The English were put in possession of neither new nor splendid acquisitions, nor had they such great influence in foreign courts ; but commerce grew up among them, and, almost without a protector, flourished with vigour. The people now began to know their real element, and this rendered them more happy than the foreign conquests, or the former victories, of the celebrated kings ; a nation, which was once subject to every invasion, and the prey of every plunderer, now became powerful, polite, laborious and enterprising. The newly successful voyages of the Spaniards and Portuguese excited their emulation ; they fitted out several expeditions for discovering a northern passage to China, and, though disappointed in their aim, their voyages were not wholly fruitless. Drake and Cavendish surrounded the globe, and discovered skill and courage superior to those very nations which had first shewed them the way. The famous Sir. Walter Raleigh, without any assistance from the government, colonized New England. These expeditions at length formed one of the most powerful marines of Europe, and they were able to oppose the fleet of Spain, called by the boast-

ing title of the Invincible Armada, with an hundred ships. When the fleet of Spain had been destroyed, partly by tempests, and partly by conduct, the English remained masters at sea. This superiority was constantly increasing, till another victory, gained over the fleet of Philip III. gained them naval sovereignty, which they have ever since inviolably preserved, and which has been scarce ever molested by a competitor.

But external commerce was not more cultivated than internal manufactures: several of the Flemings, who were persecuted from their own country, by the bad conduct of Spain, found an asylum in England: these more than repaid the protection they found, by the arts which they introduced, and the industry which was thus propagated by their example.

Thus far in the useful arts: but, in the polite arts, England excelled all the world; so that many writers fix the Augustan age of literature to that period. The disputes, caused by the reformation of religion, had retarded the progress of our language among the powerful, yet spread a love of literature among the lower orders of the state. The people now began to learn to read, and the Bible, translated into the vulgar tongue, was not only serviceable in improving their morals, but their taste. The persecution of Mary was, however, of great detriment to the language: the reformers, being driven into foreign countries, on their return, introduced into their sermons a language compounded of those dialects which they had acquired abroad, and the language of England was actually in a state of barbarity when Elizabeth came to the throne. Latin sermons were in fashion, and few of the nobility had either the courage, or

the taste, to declare themselves the patrons of learning.

Either the fortune or the discernment of Elizabeth made Parker archbishop of Canterbury; and he set himself assiduously to reform the corruptions of style, both by precept and example; for this purpose he reviewed and corrected the English translation of the Bible, and printed it with royal magnificence. His own style had all the eloquence of the times; it was manly and concise, but wanted smoothness.

The earl of Essex, a sketch of whose history you have seen, was himself one of the greatest improvers of our language; his education had freed him from the technical barbarities of the schools, and his style ran on unembarrassed by the stiffness of pedantry. His letters (particularly that which he wrote from Ireland to the queen) are regarded as models of fine writing to this day. Sir Walter Raleigh has the reputation of being one of the improvers of our language: and none can contest with him the honour of being foremost in the improvement of our history. Hooker, the author of the Ecclesiastical Polity, was the first Englishman whose style, upon theological subjects, does honour to his memory as a scholar and a gentleman: but what particularly deserves notice, is that a man, like him, bred up in poverty, and seclusion from the polite, should express himself in a more modern and elegant manner than his contemporary authors, Sidney or Raleigh, who were bred at court.

I shall mention only one prose writer more, the greatest and wisest of all our English philosophers, and perhaps the greatest philosopher among men: I need hardly mention the name of Francis Bacon,

lord Verulam: his style is copious and correct, and his learning only surpassed by his genius.

Among the poets, two of particular note attract our attention, Spencer and Shakespear: to attempt an encomium of either is needless; all praise must be too low for their merits, or unnecessary to make them more known.

In short the English now began to rival the Spaniards, who at that time, aimed at universal monarchy, both in arts and arms: the city of London became more large and more beautiful; the people of the country began to consider agriculture as one of the most useful and honourable employments; the English were in power, the second nation in Europe, and they were, shortly, to become the greatest, by becoming the most free.

During this reign, a few suffered death for their religious opinions: but we may venture to assert, that they raised the disturbances by which they suffered; for those who lived in quiet were permitted to enjoy their opinions under the necessary restraints.

If we look through history, and consider the rise of kingdoms, we shall not find, in all its volumes, such an instance of a nation becoming wise, powerful and happy, in so short a time. The source of our felicity began in Henry VII. and, though repressed by the intervening tyrannies, yet, before the end of Elizabeth's reign, who was only his granddaughter, the people became the most polished and the most happy people upon earth. Liberty, it is true, as yet, continued to fluctuate; Elizabeth knew her own power, and often stretched it to the very limits of despotism: but, when commerce was introduced, liberty necessarily entered in its train: for there never was a nation perfectly commercial and perfectly despotic.

LETTER XXXVIII.

YOU are now to turn to a reign, which, though not splendid, was useful : the English only wanted a season of peace to bring those arts to perfection which were planted in the preceding reign. No monarch was fonder of peace than James I. who succeeded Elizabeth ; and none ever enjoyed a reign of more lasting tranquillity. Historians, for what reason I know not, are fond of describing this monarch's transactions with ridicule ; but for my own part I cannot avoid giving just applause both to his wisdom and felicity.

King James came to the throne with the universal approbation of all orders of the state : for, in his person was united every claim to the crown, that either descent, bequest, or parliamentary sanction could confer. But on his first arrival, it was readily seen, that he by no means approved of the treatment of his mother, Mary queen of Scots, and not only refused to wear mourning himself for the late queen, by whom she had been beheaded ; but also denied admission to any who appeared in mourning upon her account.

Upon a review of his conduct, there are few of this monarch's actions that do not seem to spring from motives of justice and virtue : his only error seems to consist in applying the despotic laws and maxims of the Scottish government to the English constitution, which was not susceptible of them. He began his reign by a laudable attempt to unite both the kingdoms into one ; but this the jealousy of the English prevented : they were apprehensive, that the posts and employments, which were in

the gift of the court, might be conferred on the Scotch, whom they were, as yet, taught to regard as foreigners. By the repulse in this instance, he found the people he came to govern very different from those he had left, and perceived that the liberty and the spirit of the English could not be restrained by the shadows of divine right and passive obedience.

He now therefore, attempted to correct his first mistake, and to peruse the English laws, as he had formerly done those of his own country, and by these he was resolved to govern. He was in this second attempt disappointed in his aim. In a government so fluctuating as that of England, custom was ever deviating from law, and what was enacted in one reign was contradicted by precedent, in another; the laws and the manners of England were, at this particular juncture, very different from each other. The laws had all along declared in favour of an unlimited prerogative; the present manners on the contrary, were formed by instruments and upon principles of liberty. All the kings and queens before him, except such as were weakened by intestine divisions, or the dread of approaching invasion, issued rather commands than received advice from their parliaments. James was early sensible of their conduct in this respect, and strove to establish the prerogative upon the laws, unmindful of the alteration of manners among the people who had in the reign of queen Mary, got an idea of their own power, of which, when the majority are once sensible, they never desist from defending.

Numberless, therefore, were the disputes between the king and his parliament, during this

whole reign; one attempting to keep the royal splendor unfulfilled, the other aiming at lessening the dangerous part of prerogative; the one labouring to preserve the laws and institutions of former reigns, the other steadfast in asserting the inherent privileges of mankind. Thus we see virtue was the cause of the dissension on either side: and the principles of both, though seemingly opposite, were, in fact, founded either in law or in reason. When the parliament would not grant a subsidy, James had examples enough, among his predecessors, to extort a benevolence. Edward IV. Henry VIII. and others, had often done this; and he was entitled, undoubtedly, by precedent, to the same privilege. The house of commons, on the other hand, who began to find themselves the protectors of the people, and not the passive instruments of the crown, justly considered, that this extorted benevolence might, at length, make the sovereign entirely dependant of the parliament, and therefore complained against it, as an infringement of their privileges. These attempts of the crown, and those murmurings of the people, continued through this whole reign, and first gave rise to that spirit of party which has ever since subsisted in England; the one side declaring for the king's prerogative, the other for the people's liberty.

Whenever the people, as I have already observed, get sight of liberty, they never quit the view: the commons, as may naturally be expected in the present juncture, gained ground, even though defeated; and the monarch, notwithstanding his professions and resolutions to keep his prerogative untouched was every day losing some small part of his authority. Historians are apt to charge this to his imbecility; but, it, in reality, arose

from the spirit of the times ; the clergy, who had returned from banishment during the last reign, had disseminated republican principles among their hearers, and no art nor authority could check its growth, so that, had the most active, or the most diligent monarch upon earth been then seated on the throne, yet he could not have preserved the ancient privileges of English monarchy unimpaired.

The clemency and the justice of this monarch's reign early appeared from that spirit of moderation which he shewed to the professors of each religion ; the minds of the people had been long irritated against each other, and each party persecuted the rest, as it happened to prevail : James wisely observed, that men should be punished only for actions, and not for opinions ; each party murmured against him, and the universal complaint of every sect was the best argument of his moderation towards all.

Yet, mild as he was, there was a project contrived in the very beginning of his reign, for the re-establishment of popery, which seemed to be even of infernal extraction ; a more horrid or a more terrible scheme never entered into the human mind ; the massacre of St. Bartholemew, in France, in which sixty thousand protestants were murdered in cold blood, was, in reality not so dreadful. The catholics of England had expected some condescensions from the king, which he was unwilling to grant : this refusal determined them to take different measures for the establishment of their religion and their party ; they were resolved to cut off the king and both houses of parliament at one blow. The house where the parliament of England sits, is built on arched vaults, and in these the papists were determined to lay gun-powder, in order to blow up the king and all the members of both houses at their

next sitting. For this deed of desperation a number of persons united, among whom were Robert Catesby, Thomas Piercy, kinsman to the earl of Northumberland; John Grant, Ambrose Rookwood, Christopher Wright, Frances Tresham, Guy Fawkes, and Everard Digby. How horrid soever the contrivance yet every member seemed faithful and secret in the league, and, about two months before the sitting of parliament, they hired the cellar under the parliament house, and bought a quantity of coals with which it was then filled, as if for their own use; the next thing done was to convey privately, thirty-six barrels of gun-powder, which had been purchased in Holland, and which were covered under the coals and faggots. The day for the sitting of parliament approached; never was treason more secret, or ruin more apparently inevitable: the conspirators expected the day with impatience, and gloried in their meditated guilt, A remorse of private friendship saved the kingdom when all the ties, divine and human, were too weak to save it: Thomas Piercy conceived a design of saving the life of the lord Monteagle, his intimate friend and companion. About ten days before the sitting, this nobleman, upon his return home, received a letter from a person unknown, the messenger making off as soon as he had delivered it; the letter was to this effect: *Stay away from this parliament, for God and man have concurred to punish the wickedness of the times. Think not slightly of this warning; though the danger does not appear, yet they shall receive a terrible blow, without knowing from whence it comes. The danger will be past as soon as you have burnt this letter, and this counsel may do you good, but cannot do you harm.*—The contents of this mysterious letter surprised and

puzzled the nobleman to whom it was addressed: he communicated it instantly to the secretary of state, and the secretary shewed it to the council; none of them were capable of comprehending the meaning of it, and they resolved to communicate it to the king. In this universal agitation between doubt and apprehension, the king was the first who penetrated the meaning of its fatal contents; he concluded that some sudden danger was preparing by means of gun-powder. The Lord chamberlain sent proper
Nov. 5. 1605. persons, the very night before the sitting of parliament, to examine the vaults above-mentioned: there the whole train of powder was discovered, and a man in a cloak and boots, with a dark lanthorn in his hand, preparing for the dreadful attempt; this was Guy Fawkes, who passed for Piercy's servant. The atrociousness of his guilt inspired him with resolution; and, with an undaunted air, he told them, that, had he blown them and himself up together, he had been happy. He obstinately refused to name his accomplices; the sight of the rack, however, at length brought him to a confession. No nation fears death less than the English, but none dread torments more.

The conspirators, who had prepared all things to second the mine at Westminster, finding their plot discovered, fled different ways to assemble their catholic friends, whom they expected to rise in their defence; but, the country being every where alarmed against them, they were at last forced, to the number of about an hundred, to stop at an house in Warwickshire, where they were resolved to sell their lives dearly. A spark of fire happening to fall among some gun-powder that was laid to dry, it blew up, and so maimed the principal conspirators, that the survivors resolved to open the

gate, and fally through the multitude that surrounded the house. Some instantly were slain with a thousand wounds; Catesby, Piercy, and Winter, standing back to back, fought long and desperately, till in the end, the two first fell covered with blood, and the other was taken alive: Such as survived the slaughter were tried and convicted; several fell just victims to justice, and others experienced the king's mercy. Two jesuits, Garnet and Oldcorn, who were privy to the plot, suffered with the rest: the king maintained that they were punished justly; but, by their own party, they were regarded as martyrs to religion, though without ground, for James was too humane to condemn any upon such slight motives as those of opinion.

The discovery and extinction of this conspiracy which was entirely owing to the wisdom of the king, gained him the love of his subjects, though it had but little influence over his parliament, in extorting supplies. His desire of peace with foreign states diminished his authority at home; for, though he talked boldly of his prerogative in parliament, yet, unlike some of his predecessors, he had no standing army to back his pretensions: his speeches, which were rather arguments in favour of royal authority than directions or advice, only put both houses upon arguing with him in his own way, but not upon complying with his requests. They refused him supplies, when they knew it could be done with impunity. His liberality and his indigence often forced him to condescensions, which, when once granted, could never be again recalled: thus, while he thought himself enlarging the royal prerogative, he was, in reality, abridging it on every side.

Perhaps the opposition this king met with from his parliament was the motive of his encouraging favourites, who might help him to reduce them to his measures : his first choice was fixed upon Robert Carr, who, from a private gentleman, was brought up, through all the gradations of preferment, till created Earl of Somerset. An amour between this gentleman and the countess of Essex, one of the lewdest, yet finest women of her time, at last terminated in his disgrace : his friend Sir Thomas Overbury, had declared against his marrying this lady, who was espoused to another : this advice procured the resentment of Somerset, and the hatred of the countess. The king, by false pretences, was instigated to confine Sir Thomas in the Tower, and here the earl and the countess caused him to be poisoned. When this transaction came to the king's knowledge, he delivered him to public justice, by which he was condemned : but he received the royal pardon, though he ever after continued in disgrace.

His next, and his greatest favourite, was George Villars, afterwards duke of Buckingham, whose person and beauty first drew the king's attention and regard. This nobleman was the first who was ever created a duke in England without being allied to the royal family : it may be reckoned among the most capricious circumstances of this reign, that a king, who was bred a scholar should chuse, for his favourites, the most illiterate of his courtiers ; that he who trembled at a drawn sword, should lavish favours on one who promised to be the hero of romance. Buckingham first inspired young prince Charles, who was afterwards famous for his misfortunes and death, with a desire of going disguised into Spain, to court the Infanta : their adventures in this romantic expedition could fill novels, and

have actually been made the subject of many. Charles was the knight-errant, and Buckingham served under him as squire : they set out post, and travelled through France under the names of Jack and Tom Smith. They appeared at Paris in large bushy periwigs, which shadowed their faces. They were received in Spain with all possible respect ; but Buckingham filled the whole court with intrigues, adventures, serenades, and jealousy. To make the whole complete, he fell in love with the dutchess of Olivarez, the prime minister's wife, and insulted the prime minister. These levities were not to be endured at such a court as that of Spain, where jealousy is so prevalent, and decorum so necessary; the match was broke off, and the prince was permitted to return in safety.

A match for this prince was soon after negotiated with Henrietta, the daughter of Henry IV. of France, and this met with better success than the former : Charles, had seen this princess, when he passed through that kingdom in disguise : he admired her beauty, and from every quarter was informed of her sense and discretion. A dispensation was got from the pope for her marrying a protestant prince, but king James died before the consummation of the nuptials.

Were we to take the character of this monarch as described by Rapin, we should consider him as one of the worst of princes, even while he pretends to defend him. It is this injudicious historian's method, wherever he finds a good character among our kings to load it with reproach : wherever he meets a bad one, to extenuate its guilt : so that every monarch is levelled by him to one common standard of indifference. His remarks upon particular facts are similar to his characters : whatever

other historians have laid down as motives, he undertakes to contradict, and fancies that he thus acquires an air of impartiality. In the present instance he strongly insinuates throughout, that James was a papist, with no better proofs than his being ever a favourer of toleration : he had but just before blamed Mary, and with reason for her implacable partiality, yet he condemns James only because he was impartial. To this monarch the English are indebted for that noble freedom of opinion they have since enjoyed, a benefit of which narrow-minded bigots have too often strove to deprive them.

With regard to foreign negotiations, James neither understood nor cultivated them ; and, perhaps, in the government of such a kingdom as England, domestic politics alone are requisite. His reign was marked with none of the splendors of triumph, nor any new conquests or acquisitions: but the arts were nevertheless silently and happily going on to improvement ; reason was extending its influence, and shewing mankind a thousand errors in religion and government that had been rivetted by long prescription. People now no longer joined to some popular leader, but each began to think for himself. The reformation had introduced a spirit of liberty, even while the constitution and the laws were built upon arbitrary power. James taught them, by his own example, to argue upon these topics ; he set up the divine authority of kings against the natural privileges of the people : the subject began in controversy, and it was soon found that the monarch's was the weakest side.

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